東京創元社

グリムのような物語

スノウホワイト

Geschichten nach Grimm
Sneewittchen

諸星大二郎

東京創元社

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清水玲奈

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諸星大二郎
Daijiro Morohoshi

東京創元社

装幀　関善之 for VORALE inc

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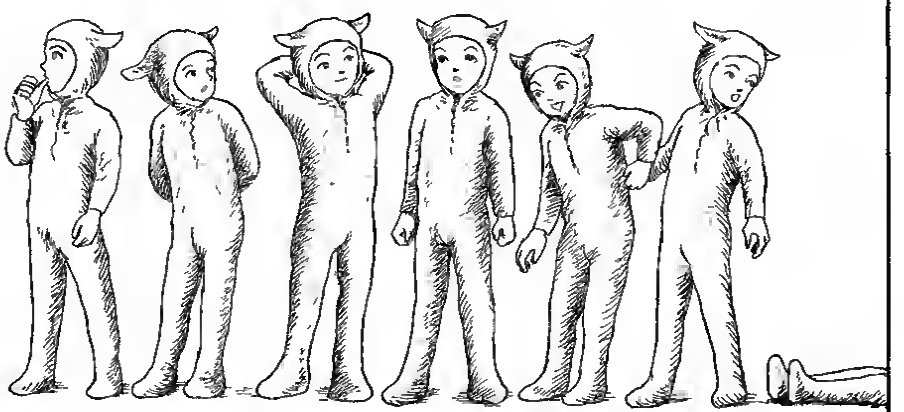
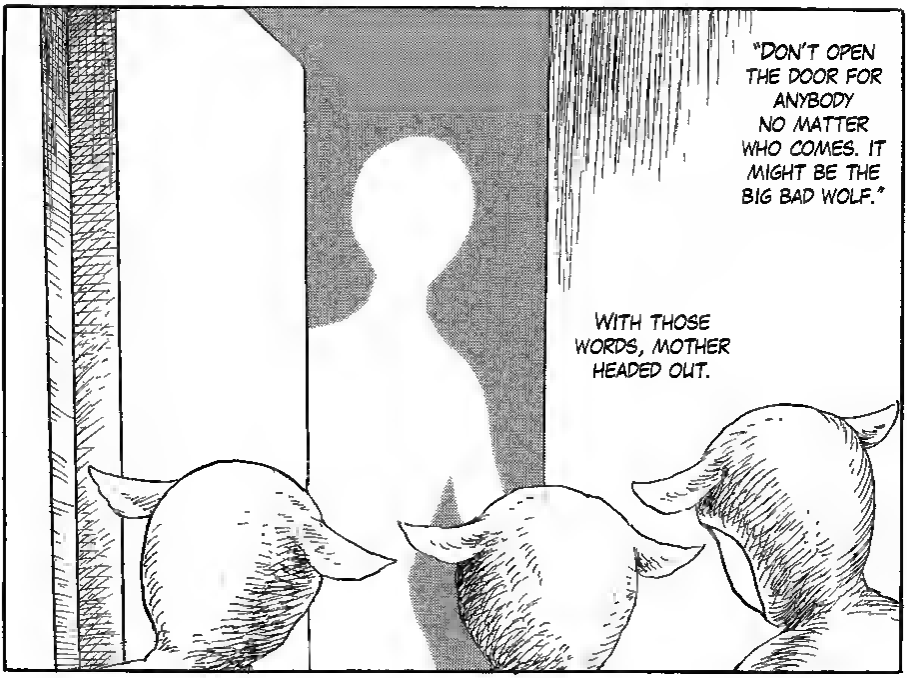
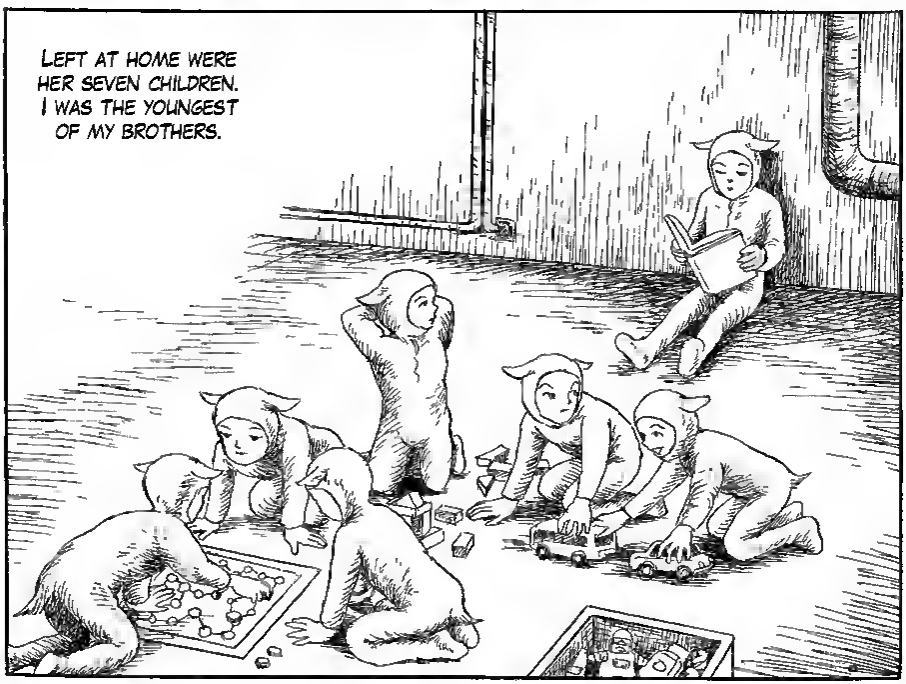
The Wolf and the Seven Young Goats

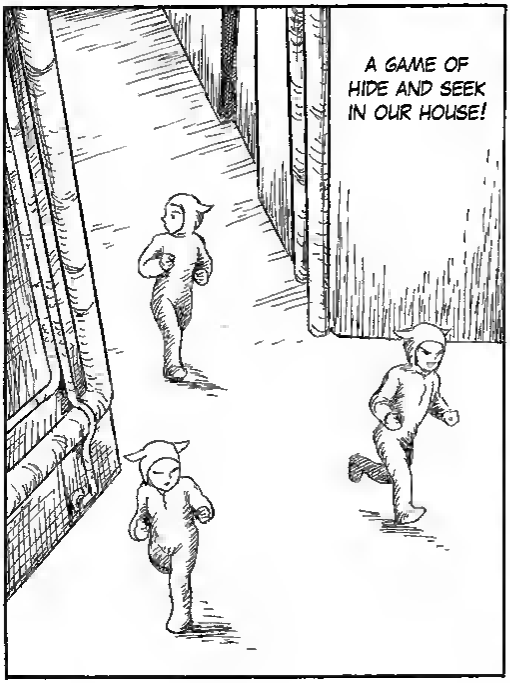


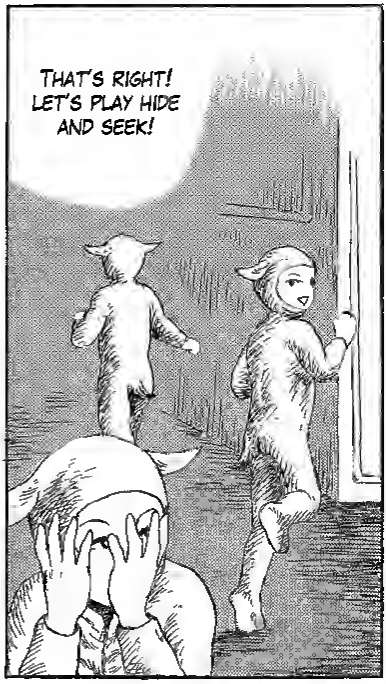

"DON'T OPEN THE DOOR FOR ANYBODY NO MATTER WHO COMES. IT MIGHT BE THE BIG BAD WOLF."
WITH THOSE WORDS, MOTHER HEADED OUT.


LEFT AT HOME WERE HER SEVEN CHILDREN. I WAS THE YOUNGEST OF MY BROTHERS.

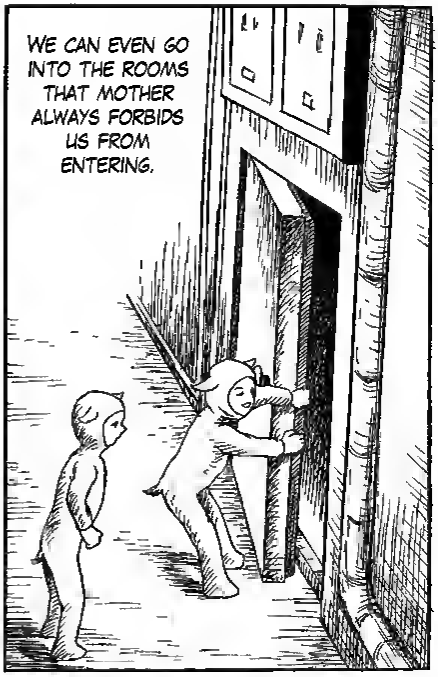
AND WE EVEN HAD OUR SNACKS ALREADY...

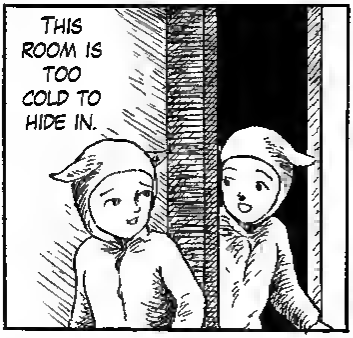
WE EVENTUALLY GREW TIRED OF PLAYING CARDS, DICE, AND EVEN BLOCKS.


A GAME OF HIDE AND SEEK IN OUR HOUSE!


THAT'S RIGHT! LET'S PLAY HIDE AND SEEK!

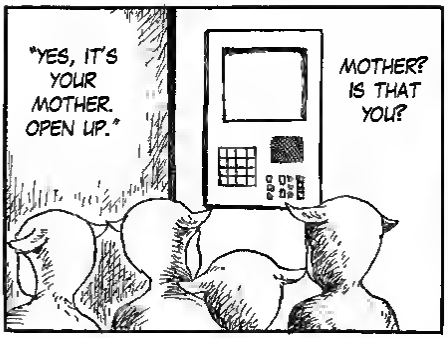
BRR, IT'S FREEZING HERE!
WHAT IS THIS ROOM?

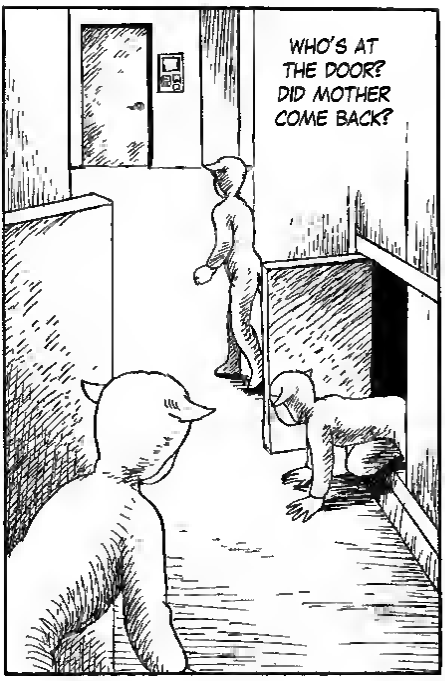

WE CAN EVEN GO INTO THE ROOMS THAT MOTHER ALWAYS FORBIDS US FROM ENTERING.

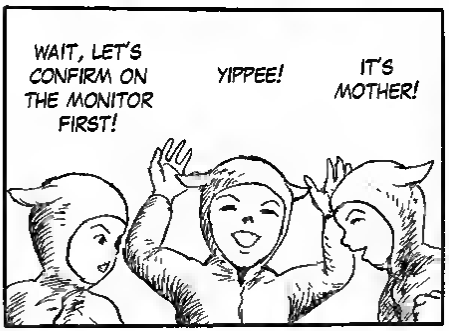

THIS ROOM IS TOO COLD TO HIDE IN.

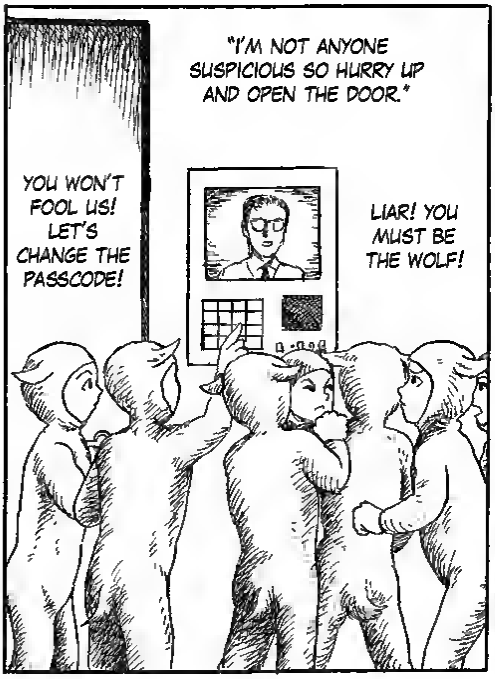
BZZZZT!

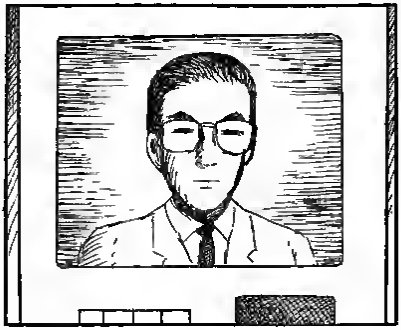
WHAT A STRANGE, COLD ROOM!

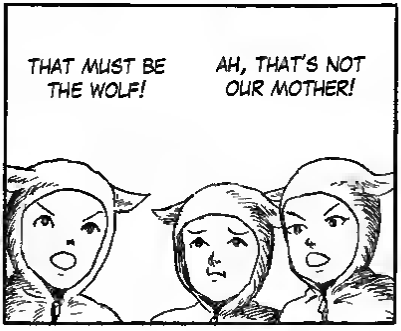

"YES, IT'S YOUR MOTHER. OPEN UP."
MOTHER? IS THAT YOU?

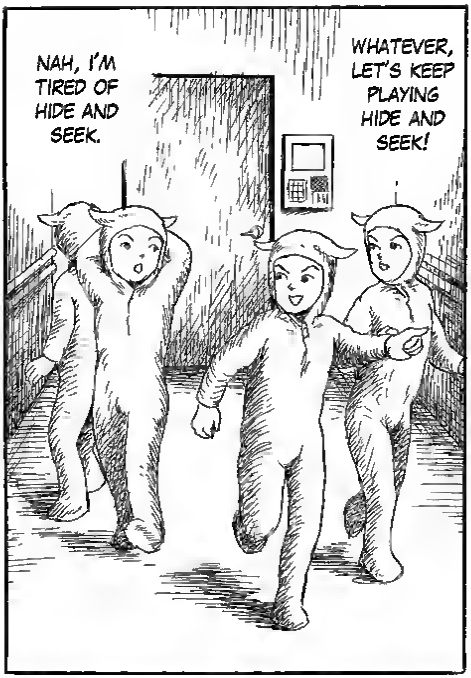

WHO'S AT THE DOOR? DID MOTHER COME BACK?

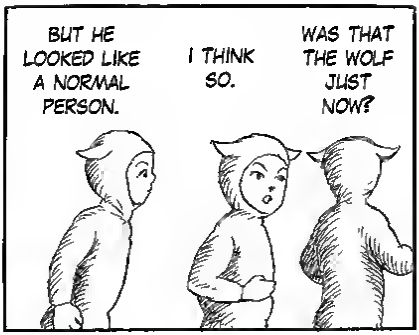

WAIT, LET'S CONFIRM ON THE MONITOR FIRST!
YIPPEE!
IT'S MOTHER!

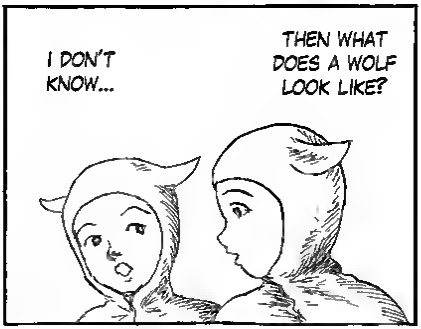

"I'M NOT ANYONE SUSPICIOUS SO HURRY UP AND OPEN THE DOOR."
YOU WON'T FOOL US! LET'S CHANGE THE PASSCODE!
LIAR! YOU MUST BE THE WOLF!

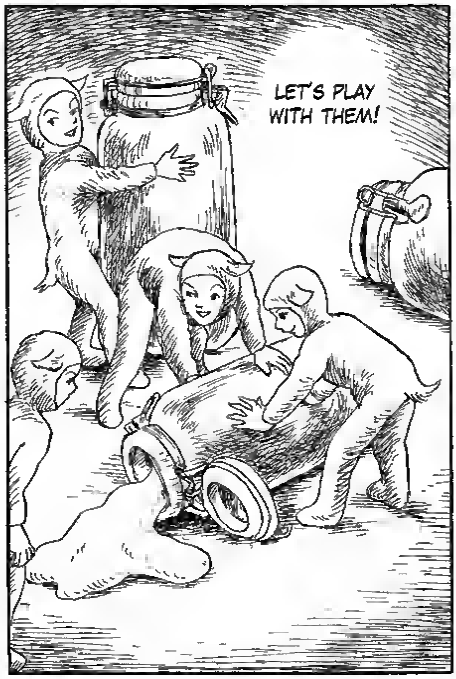


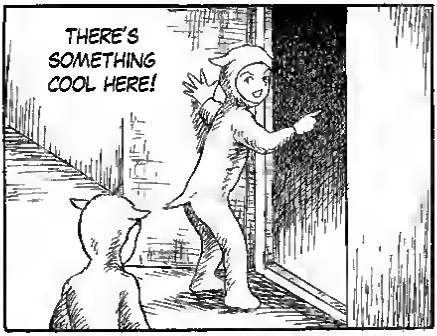

THAT MUST BE THE WOLF!
AH, THAT'S NOT OUR MOTHER!

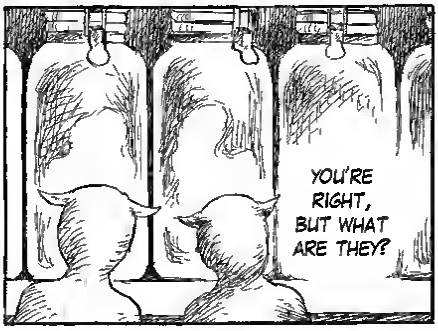

NAH, I'M TIRED OF HIDE AND SEEK.
WHATEVER, LET'S KEEP PLAYING HIDE AND SEEK!

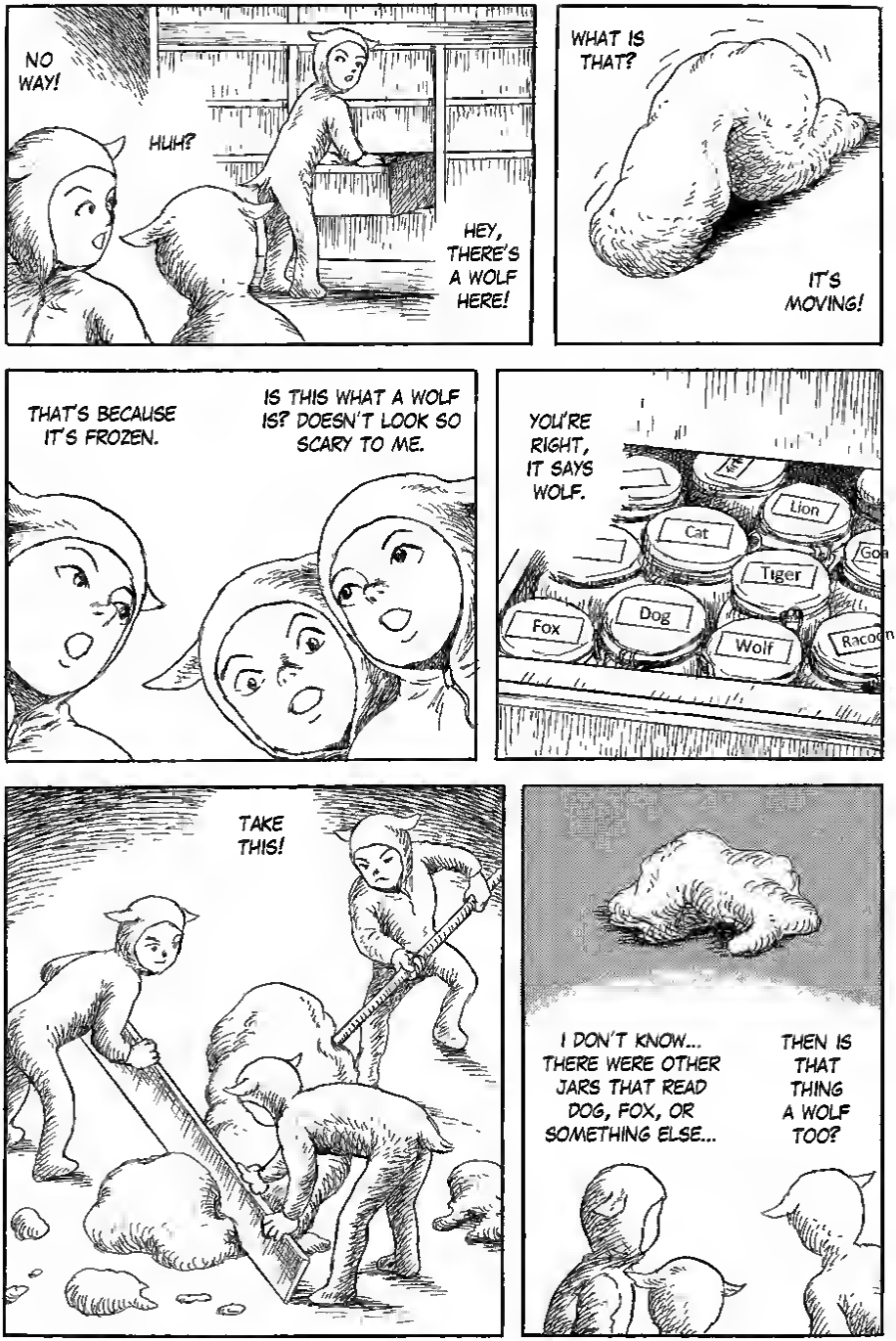

BUT HE LOOKED LIKE A NORMAL PERSON.
I THINK SO.
WAS THAT THE WOLF JUST NOW?

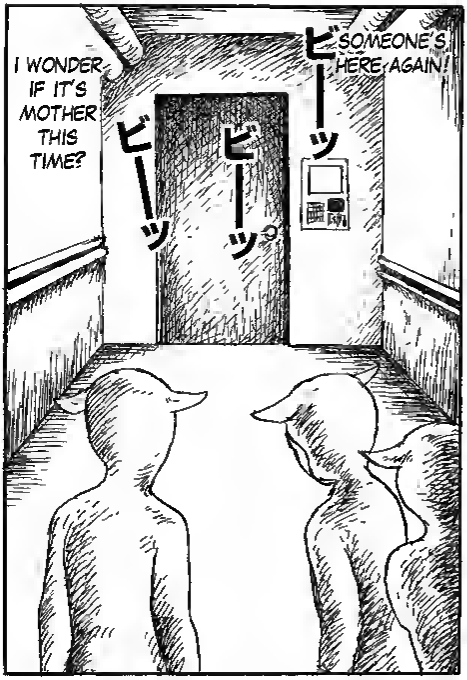

I DON'T KNOW...
THEN WHAT DOES A WOLF LOOK LIKE?


LET'S PLAY WITH THEM!


THERE'S SOMETHING COOL HERE!


YOU'RE RIGHT, BUT WHAT ARE THEY?


NO WAY!
HUH?
HEY, THERE'S A WOLF HERE!
WHAT IS THAT?
IT'S MOVING!
THAT'S BECAUSE IT'S FROZEN.
IS THIS WHAT A WOLF IS? DOESN'T LOOK SO SCARY TO ME.
YOU'RE RIGHT, IT SAYS WOLF.
Lion
Cat
Tiger
Dog
Fox
Wolf
TAKE THIS!
I DON'T KNOW... THERE WERE OTHER JARS THAT READ DOG, FOX, OR SOMETHING ELSE...
THEN IS THAT THING A WOLF TOO?


I WONDER IF IT'S MOTHER THIS TIME?
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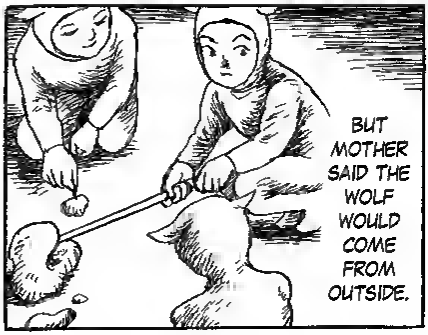
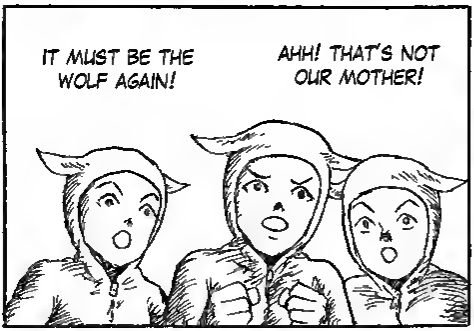
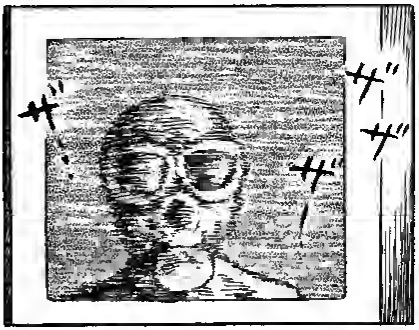
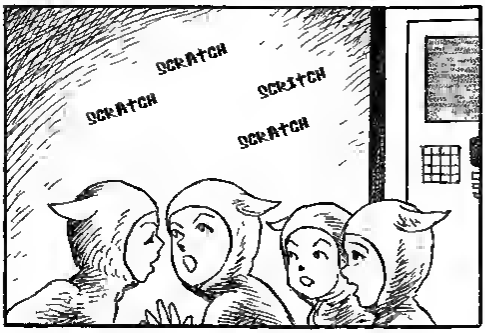
SOMEONE'S HERE AGAIN!

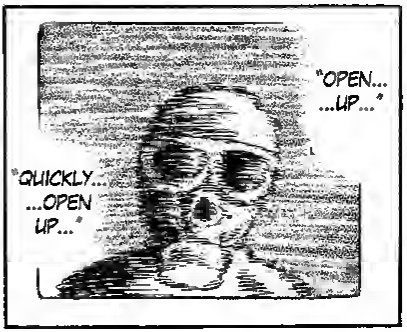

BUT MOTHER SAID THE WOLF WOULD COME FROM OUTSIDE.

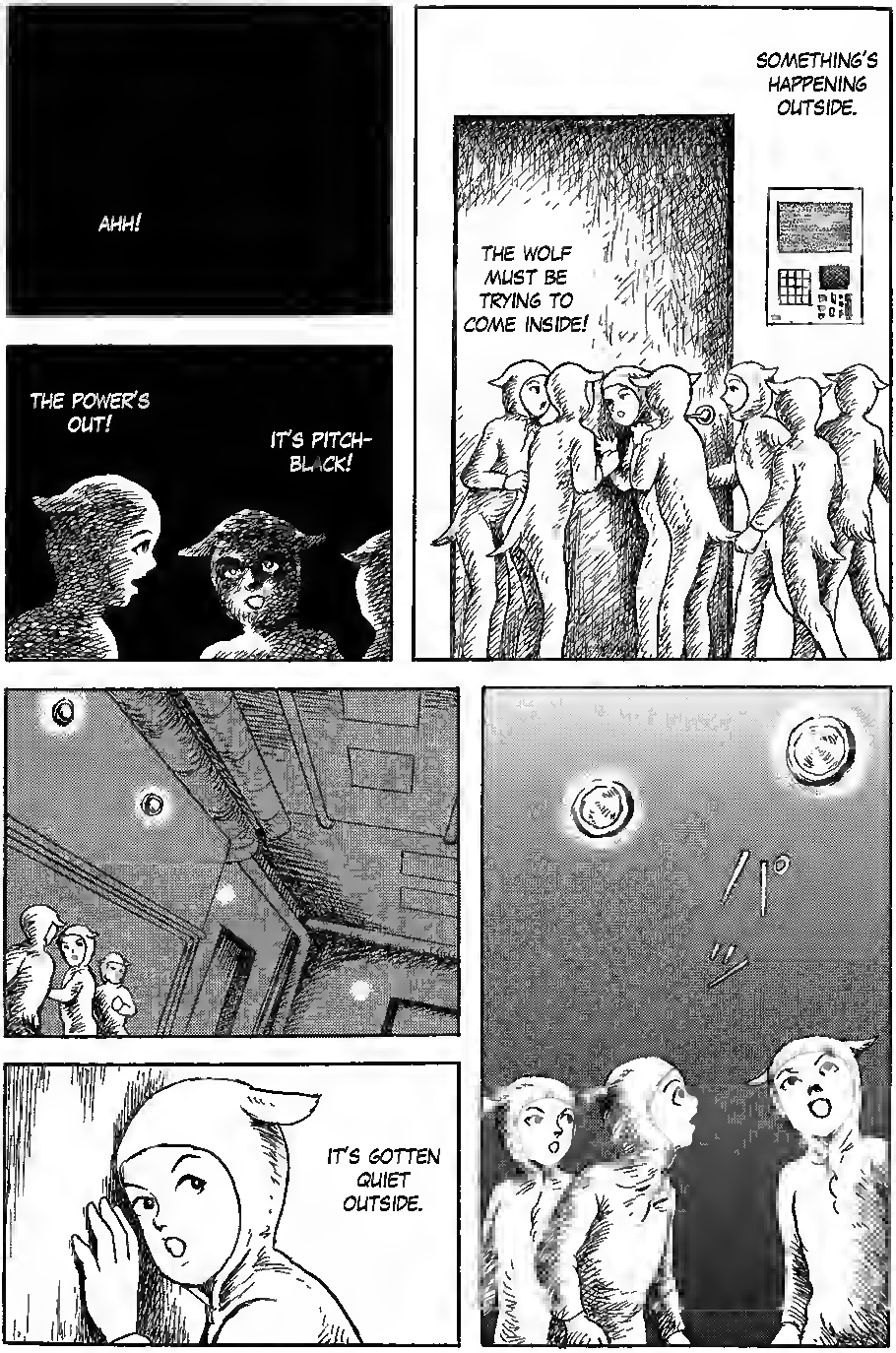
BZZZZZT!
BZZZZZT!

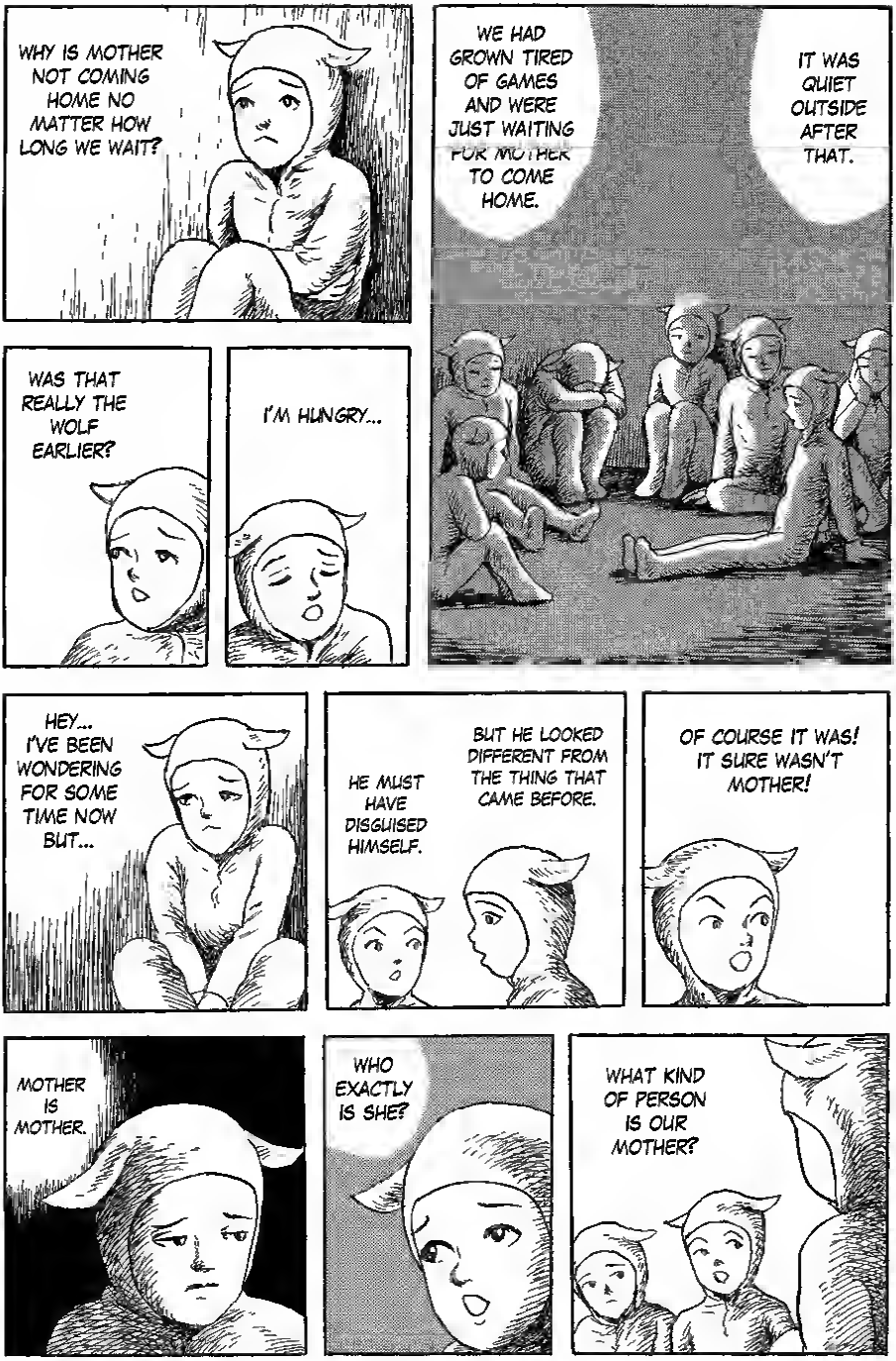

IT MUST BE THE WOLF AGAIN!
AHH! THAT'S NOT OUR MOTHER!

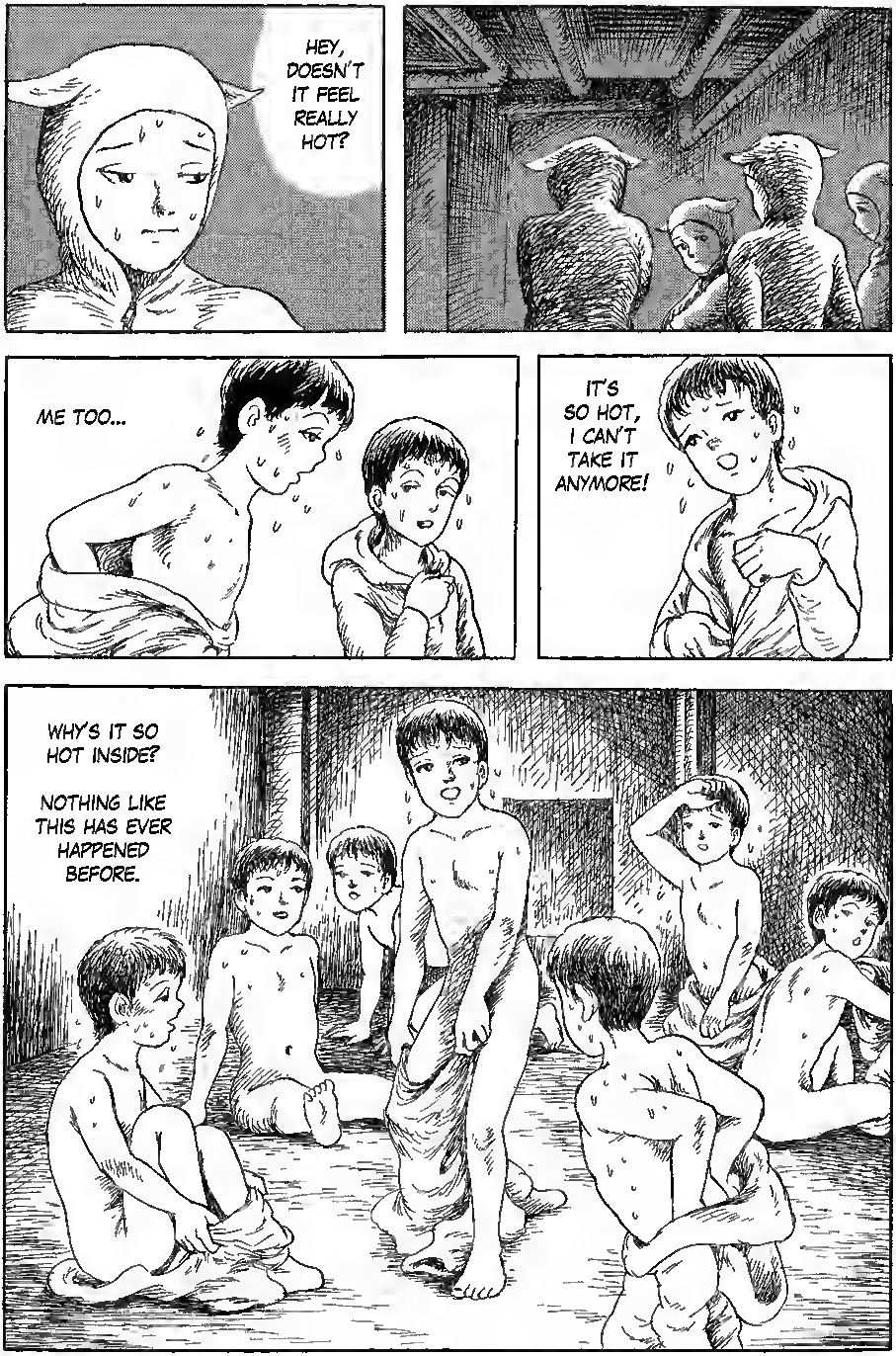


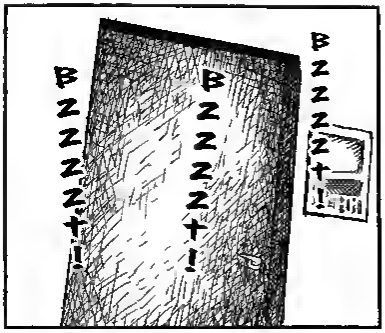

SCRATCH
SCRATCH
SCRATCH
SCRATCH

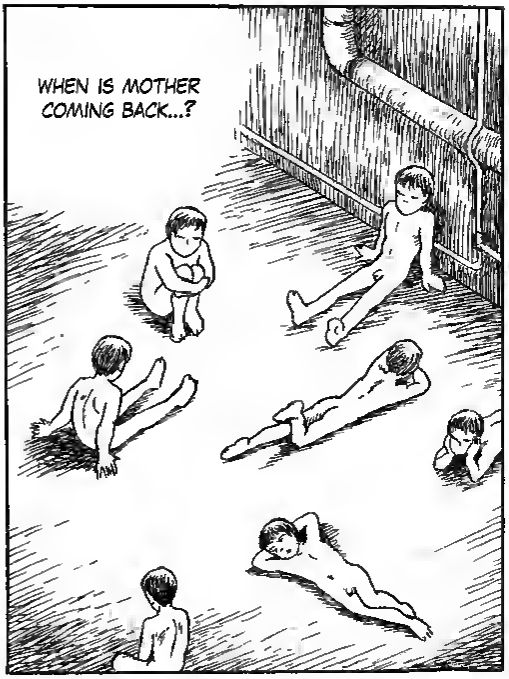

"OPEN... ...UP..."
"QUICKLY... ...OPEN UP..."

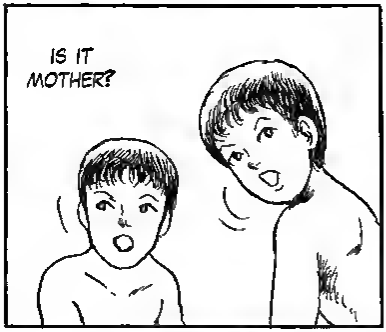

AHH!
THE POWER'S OUT!
IT'S PITCH-BLACK!
SOMETHING'S HAPPENING OUTSIDE.
THE WOLF MUST BE TRYING TO COME INSIDE!
IT'S GOTTEN QUIET OUTSIDE.

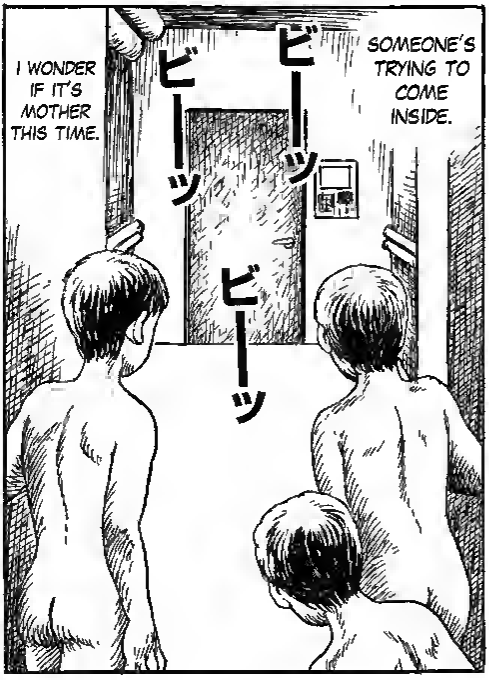

WHY IS MOTHER NOT COMING HOME NO MATTER HOW LONG WE WAIT?
WE HAD GROWN TIRED OF GAMES AND WERE JUST WAITING FOR MOTHER TO COME HOME.
IT WAS QUIET OUTSIDE AFTER THAT.
WAS THAT REALLY THE WOLF EARLIER?
I'M HUNGRY...
HEY... I'VE BEEN WONDERING FOR SOME TIME NOW BUT...
HE MUST HAVE DISGUISED HIMSELF.
BUT HE LOOKED DIFFERENT FROM THE THING THAT CAME BEFORE.
OF COURSE IT WAS! IT SURE WASN'T MOTHER!
MOTHER IS MOTHER.
WHO EXACTLY IS SHE?
WHAT KIND OF PERSON IS OUR MOTHER?


HEY, DOESN'T IT FEEL REALLY HOT?
ME TOO...
IT'S SO HOT, I CAN'T TAKE IT ANYMORE!
WHY'S IT SO HOT INSIDE?
NOTHING LIKE THIS HAS EVER HAPPENED BEFORE.


BZZZZZT!
BZZZZZT!
BZZZZZT!


WHEN IS MOTHER COMING BACK...?


IS IT MOTHER?


I WONDER IF IT'S MOTHER THIS TIME.
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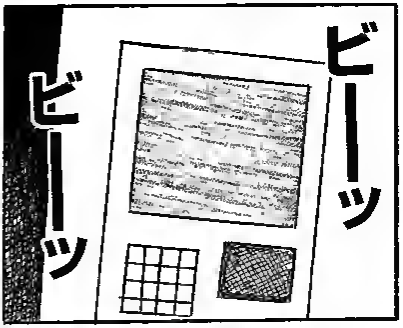
SOMEONE'S TRYING TO COME INSIDE.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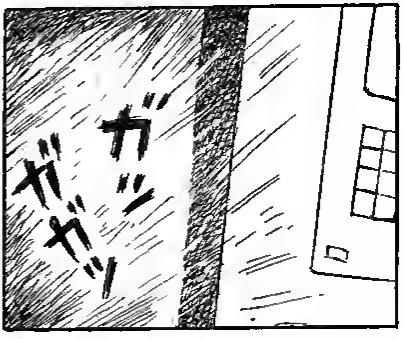
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NO, IT MIGHT BE THE WOLF!
IT'S MOTHER! LET'S OPEN UP!
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ガッ
ギシッギシッ
ビーッ
ビーッ
バキッ
THAT'S NOT MOTHER'S HAND!
AHH, ITS HAND!
THE THING TRIED TO FORCE ITSELF INSIDE.
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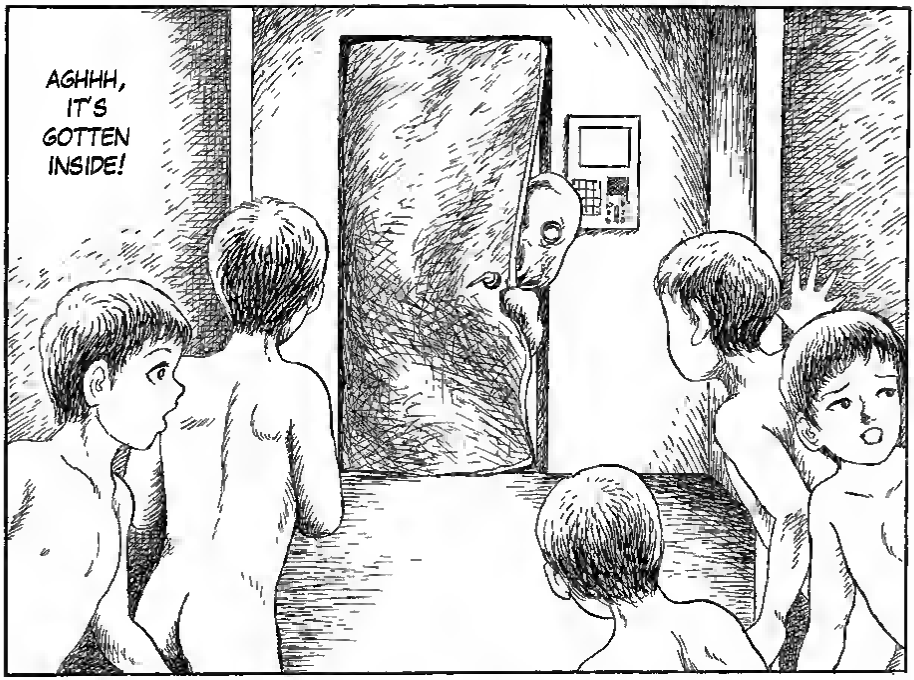
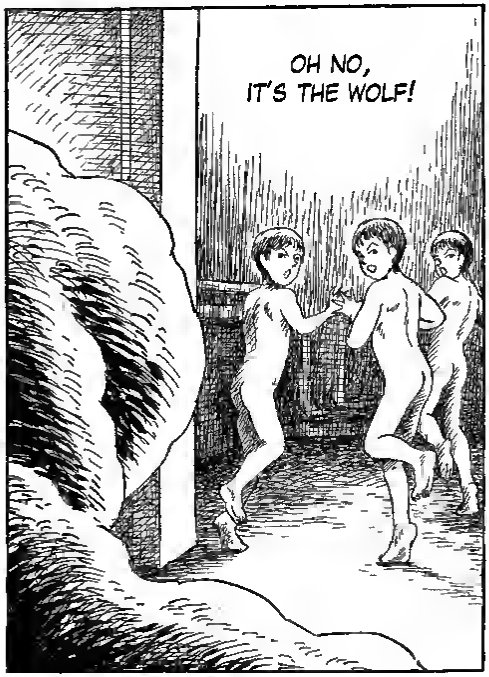
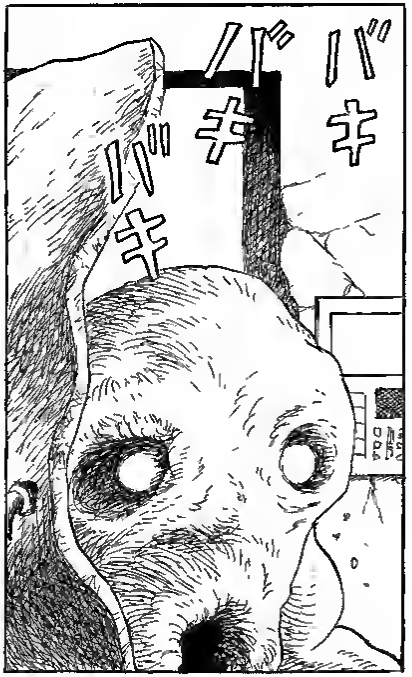
ビーッ
ビーッ


AGHHH, IT'S GOTTEN INSIDE!


OH NO, IT'S THE WOLF!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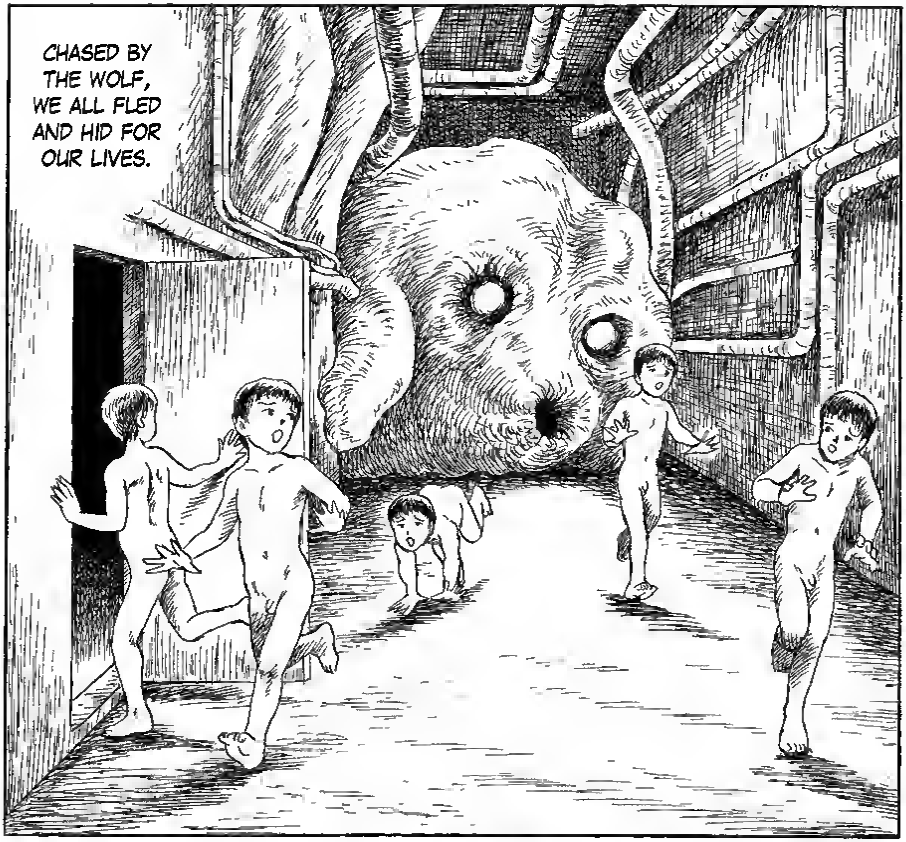
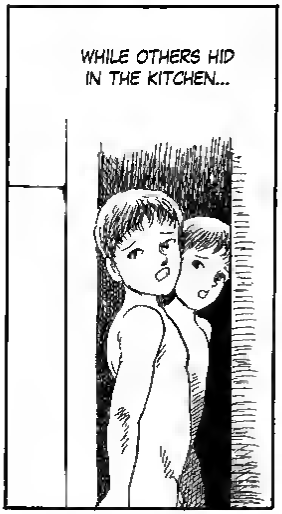
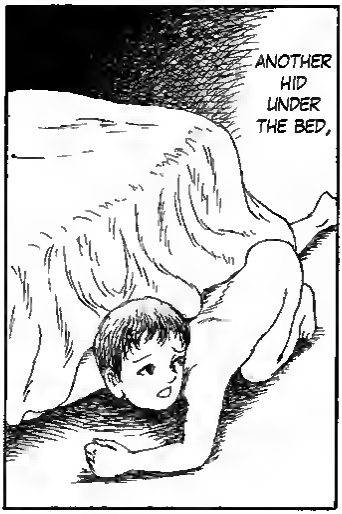
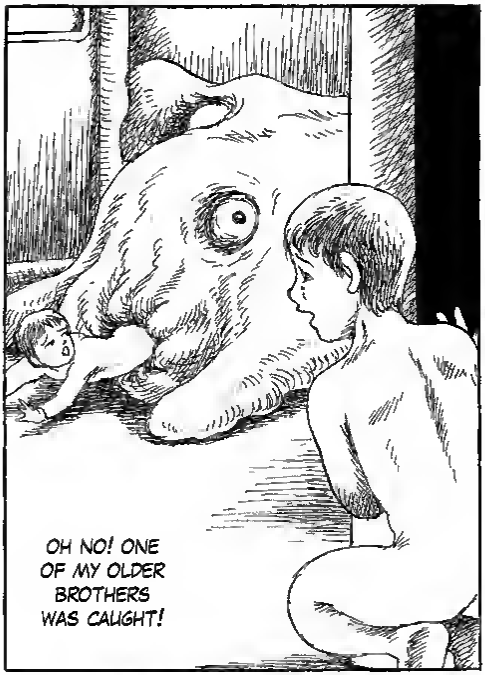
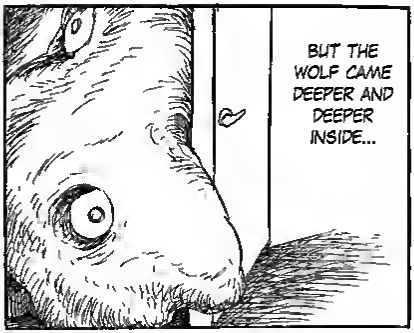

CHASED BY THE WOLF, WE ALL FLED AND HID FOR OUR LIVES.

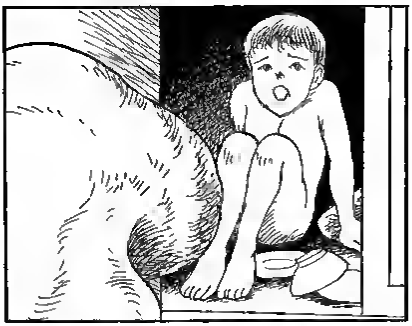

WHILE OTHERS HID IN THE KITCHEN...

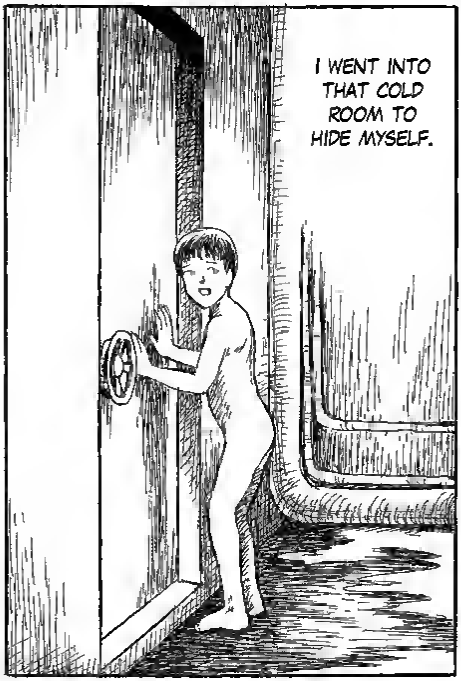

ANOTHER HID UNDER THE BED,

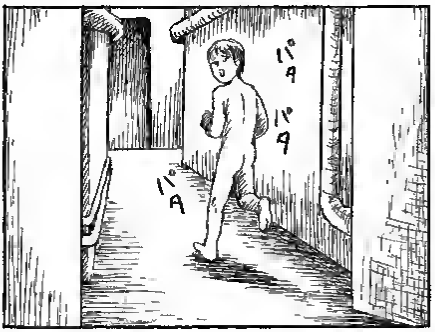
ONE HID IN THE CUP-BOARD,

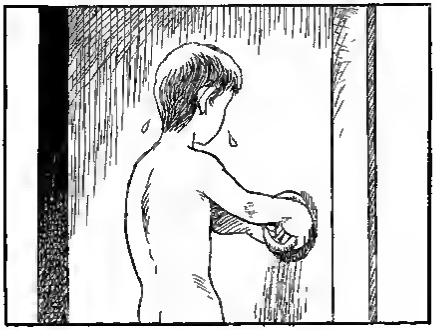

OH NO! ONE OF MY OLDER BROTHERS WAS CAUGHT!

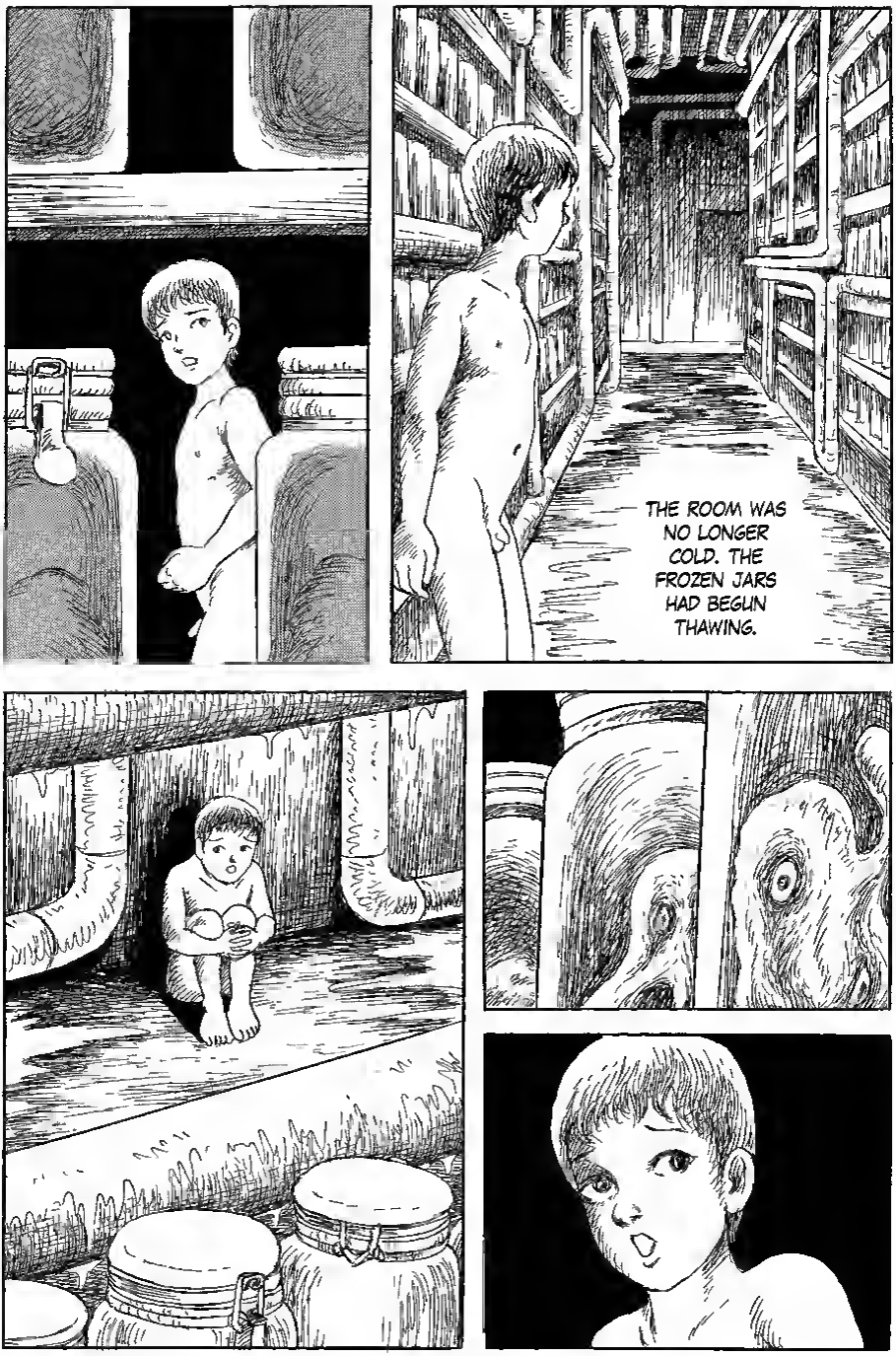

BUT THE WOLF CAME DEEPER AND DEEPER INSIDE...

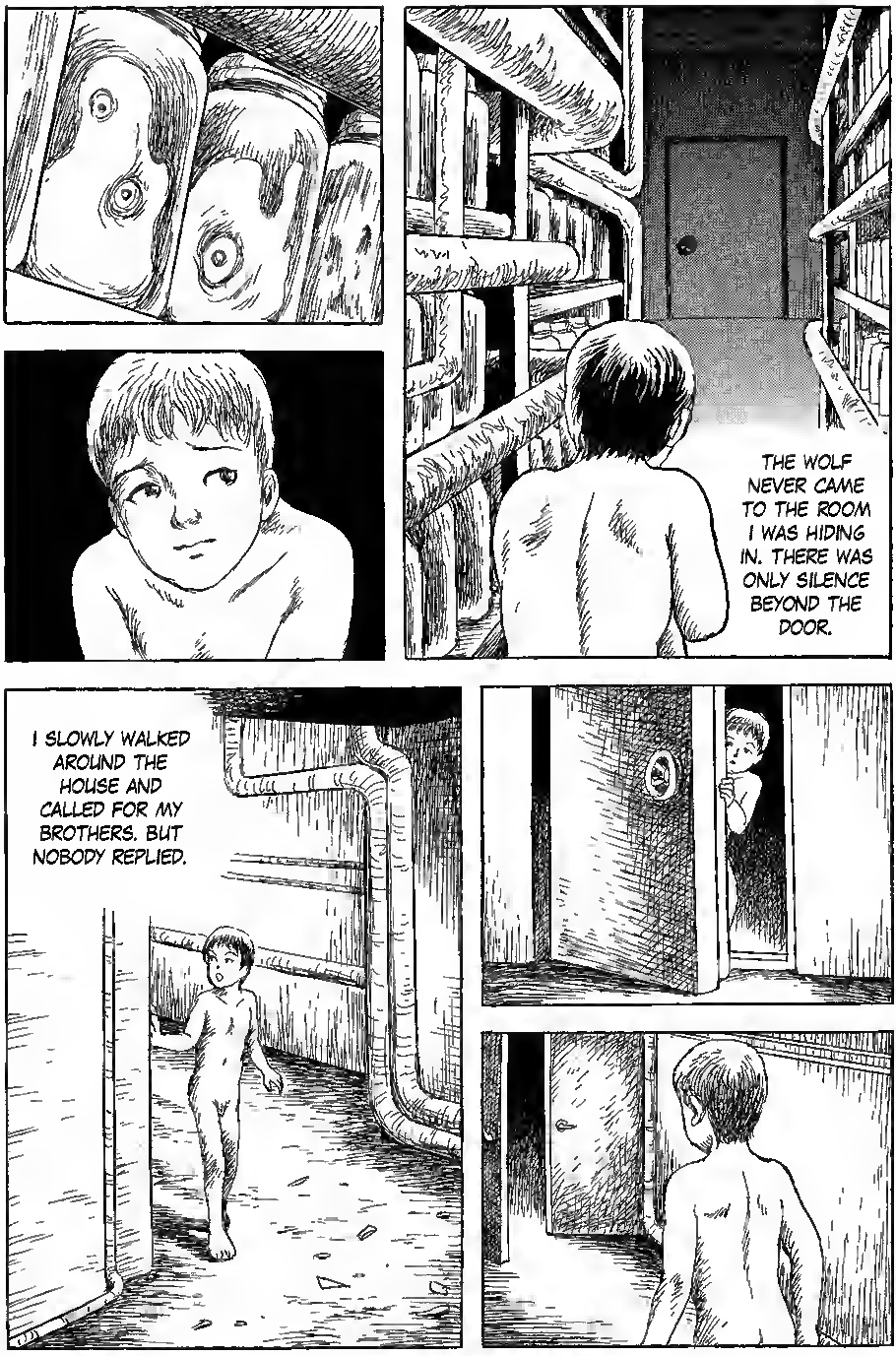


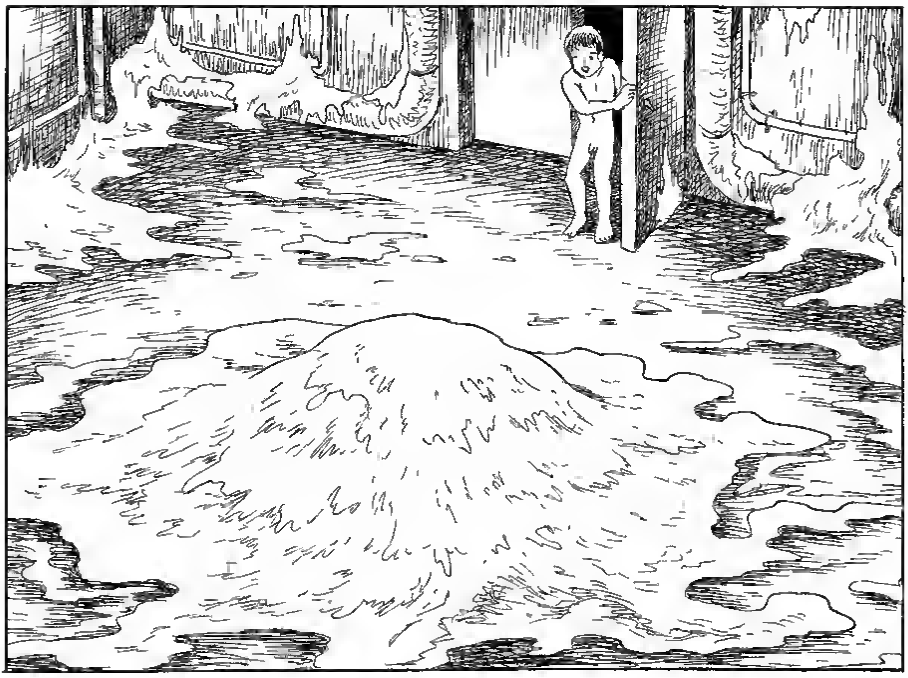

I WENT INTO THAT COLD ROOM TO HIDE MYSELF.

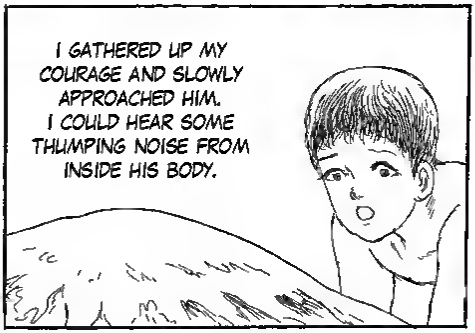


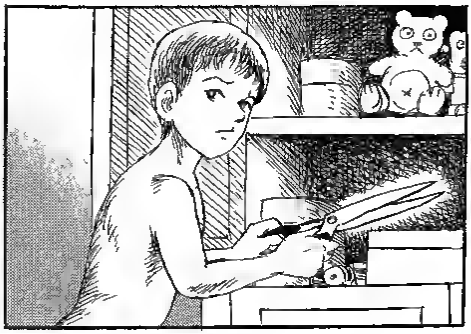



THE ROOM WAS NO LONGER COLD. THE FROZEN JARS HAD BEGUN THAWING.

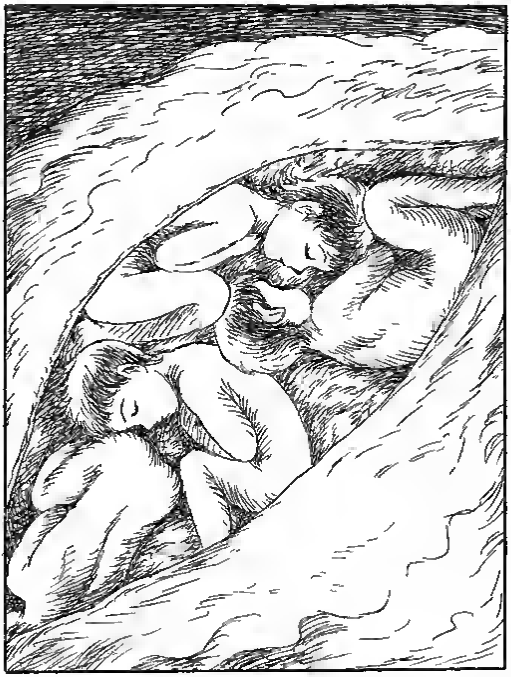

THE WOLF NEVER CAME TO THE ROOM I WAS HIDING IN. THERE WAS ONLY SILENCE BEYOND THE DOOR.
I SLOWLY WALKED AROUND THE HOUSE AND CALLED FOR MY BROTHERS. BUT NOBODY REPLIED.

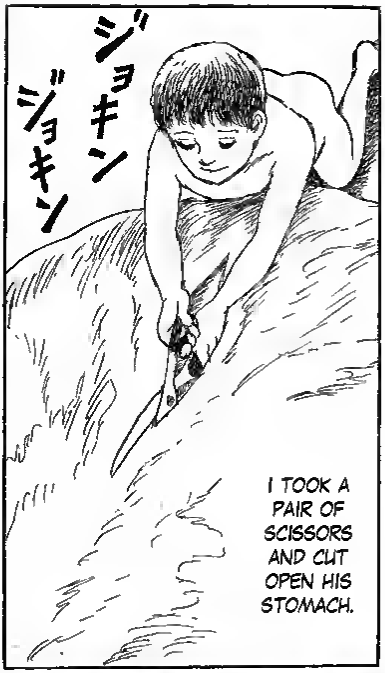



I GATHERED UP MY COURAGE AND SLOWLY APPROACHED HIM. I COULD HEAR SOME THUMPING NOISE FROM INSIDE HIS BODY.



THE WOLF WAS HERE. BUT HE WAS LYING STILL ON THE FLOOR. MAYBE HE HAD FALLEN ASLEEP.

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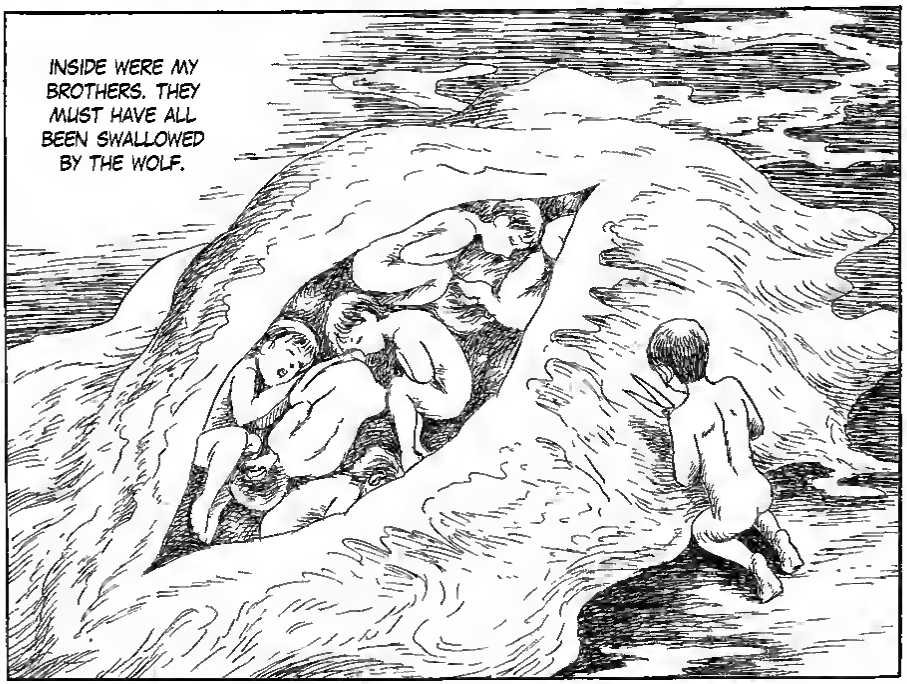
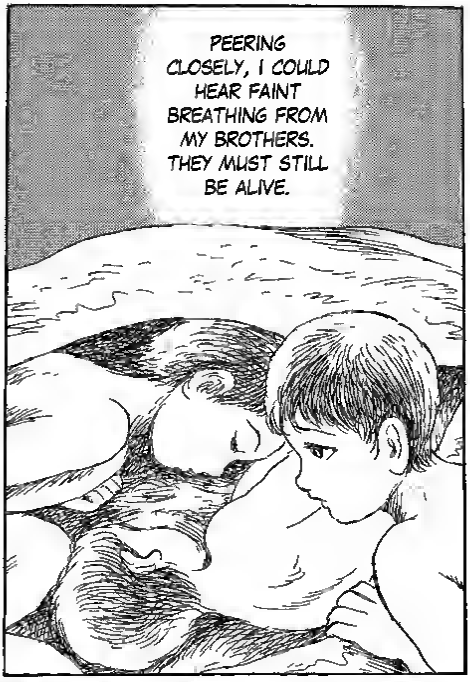
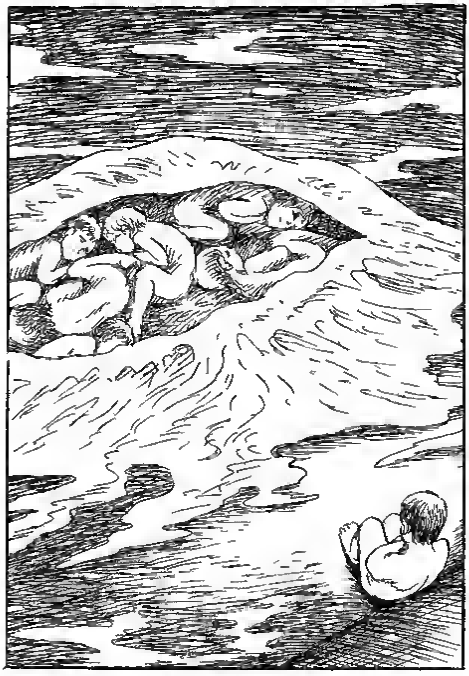
I TOOK A PAIR OF SCISSORS AND CUT OPEN HIS STOMACH.


INSIDE WERE MY BROTHERS. THEY MUST HAVE ALL BEEN SWALLOWED BY THE WOLF.

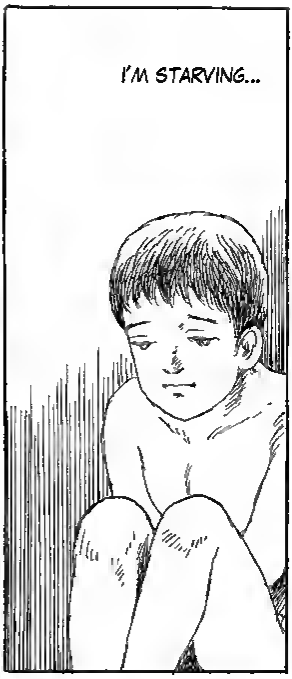
I TRIED WAKING THEM UP BUT NONE OF THEM WOULD WAKE UP.

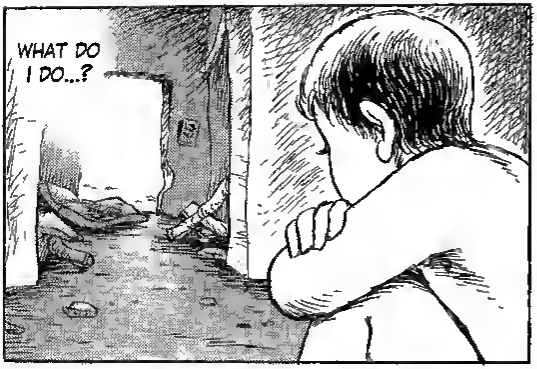

PEERING CLOSELY, I COULD HEAR FAINT BREATHING FROM MY BROTHERS. THEY MUST STILL BE ALIVE.



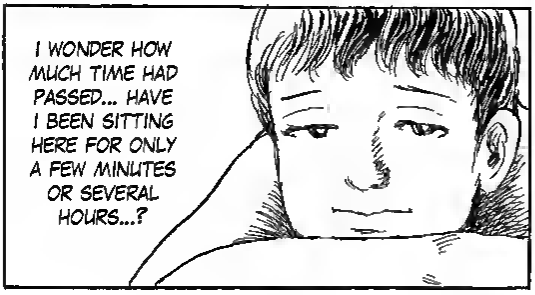
WHAT DO I DO...?

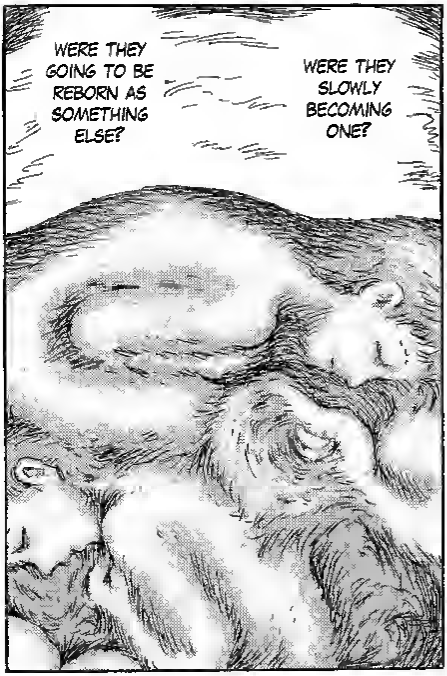
I WARMED UP AND ATE SOME OF THE MICROWAVABLE FOODS LEFT IN THE KITCHEN.


I'M STARVING...


WHAT DO I DO...?

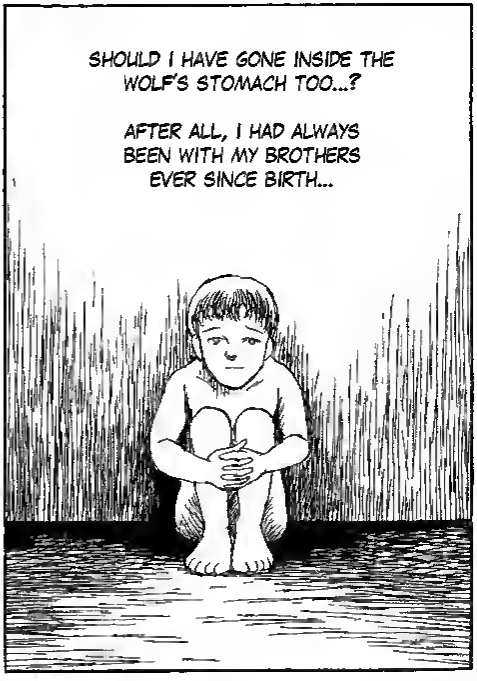
THERE WERE NO SIGNS OF ANYBODY OUTSIDE COMING.

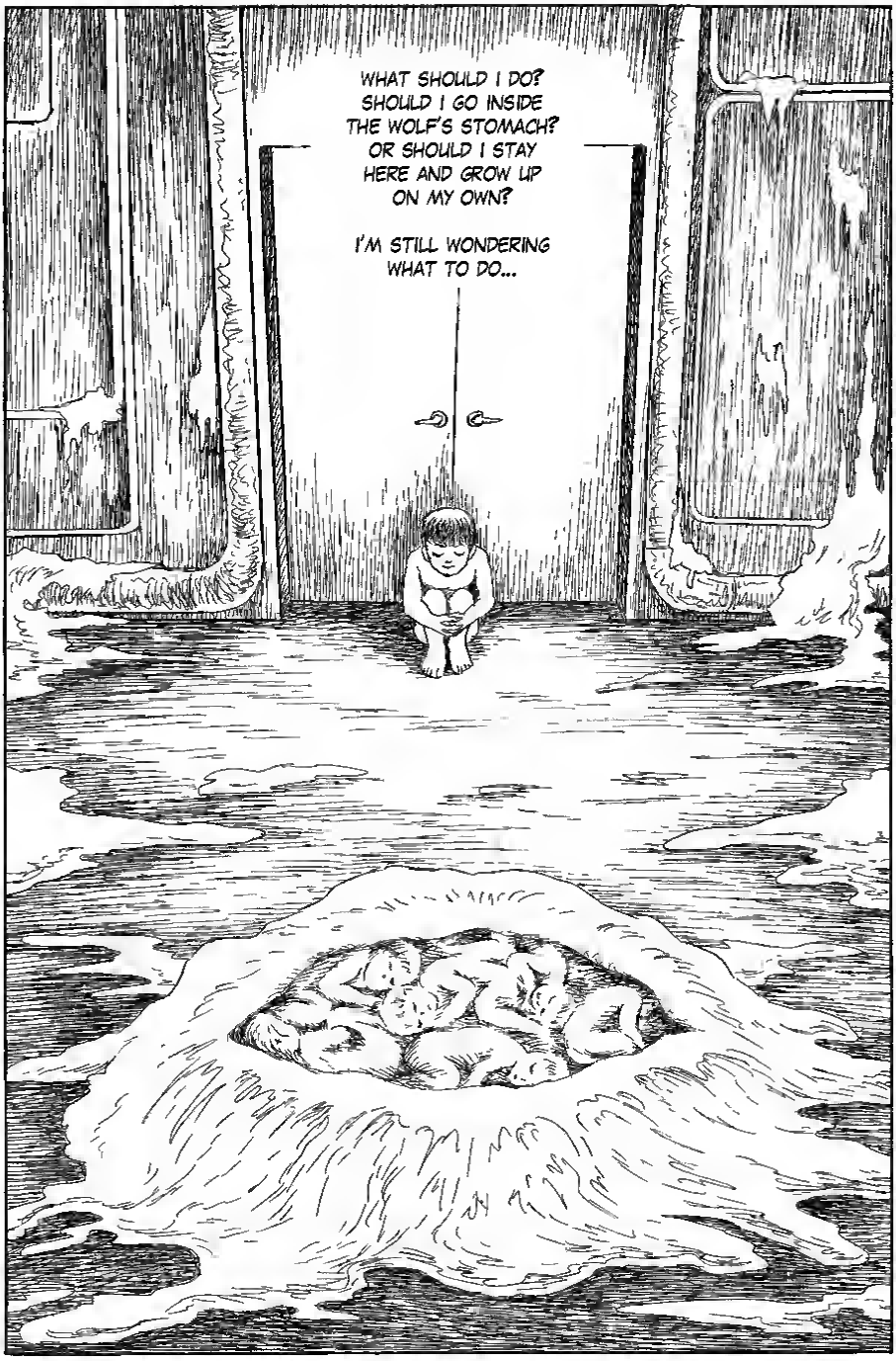

I WONDER HOW MUCH TIME HAD PASSED... HAVE I BEEN SITTING HERE FOR ONLY A FEW MINUTES OR SEVERAL HOURS...?


WERE THEY GOING TO BE REBORN AS SOMETHING ELSE?
WERE THEY SLOWLY BECOMING ONE?

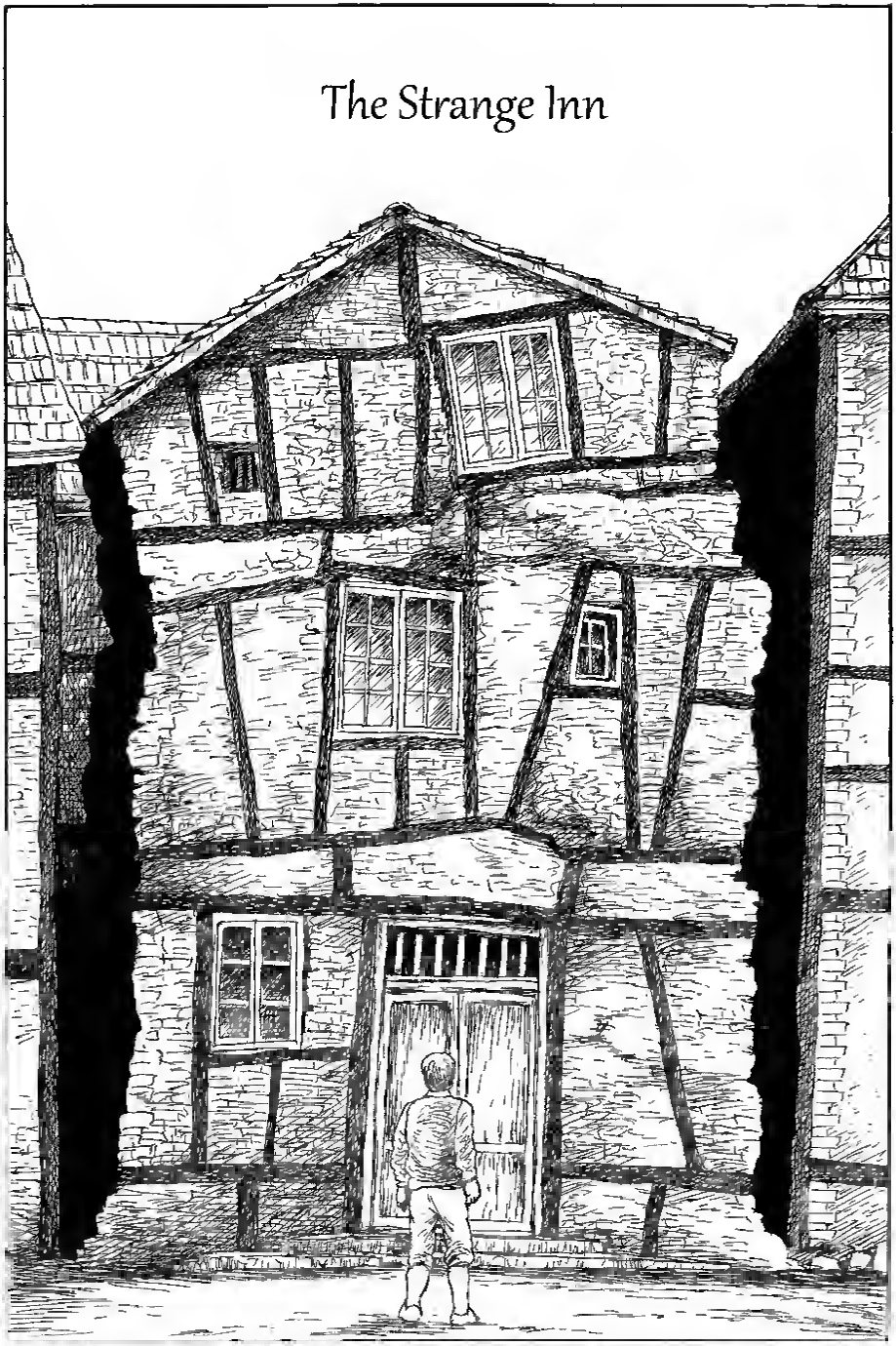
MY BROTHERS SLOWLY STARTED TO MORPH INSIDE THE WOLF'S STOMACH.

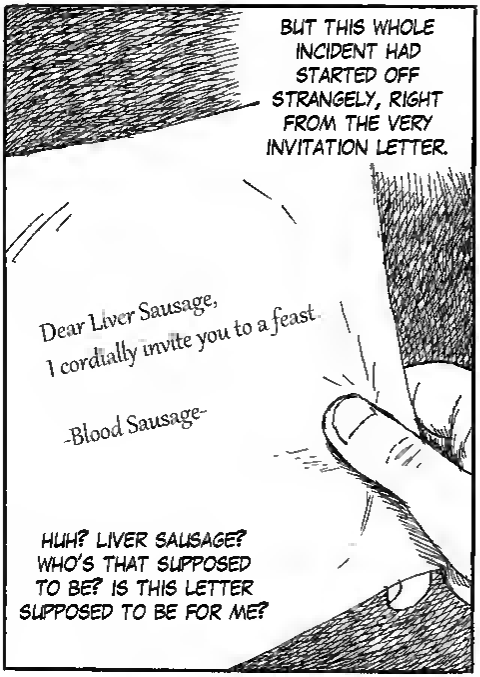
MOTHER STILL DID NOT RETURN. I HAD A FEELING SHE WOULD NOT EVER RETURN...


SHOULD I HAVE GONE INSIDE THE WOLF'S STOMACH TOO...?
AFTER ALL, I HAD ALWAYS BEEN WITH MY BROTHERS EVER SINCE BIRTH...

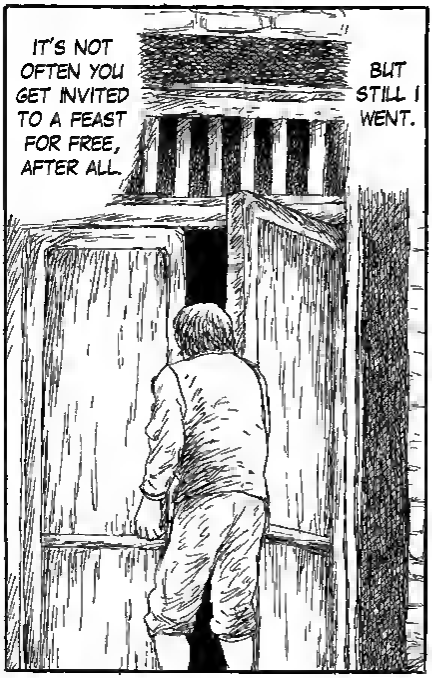

WHAT SHOULD I DO?
SHOULD I GO INSIDE
THE WOLF'S STOMACH?
OR SHOULD I STAY
HERE AND GROW UP
ON MY OWN?
I'M STILL WONDERING
WHAT TO DO...

The Strange Inn

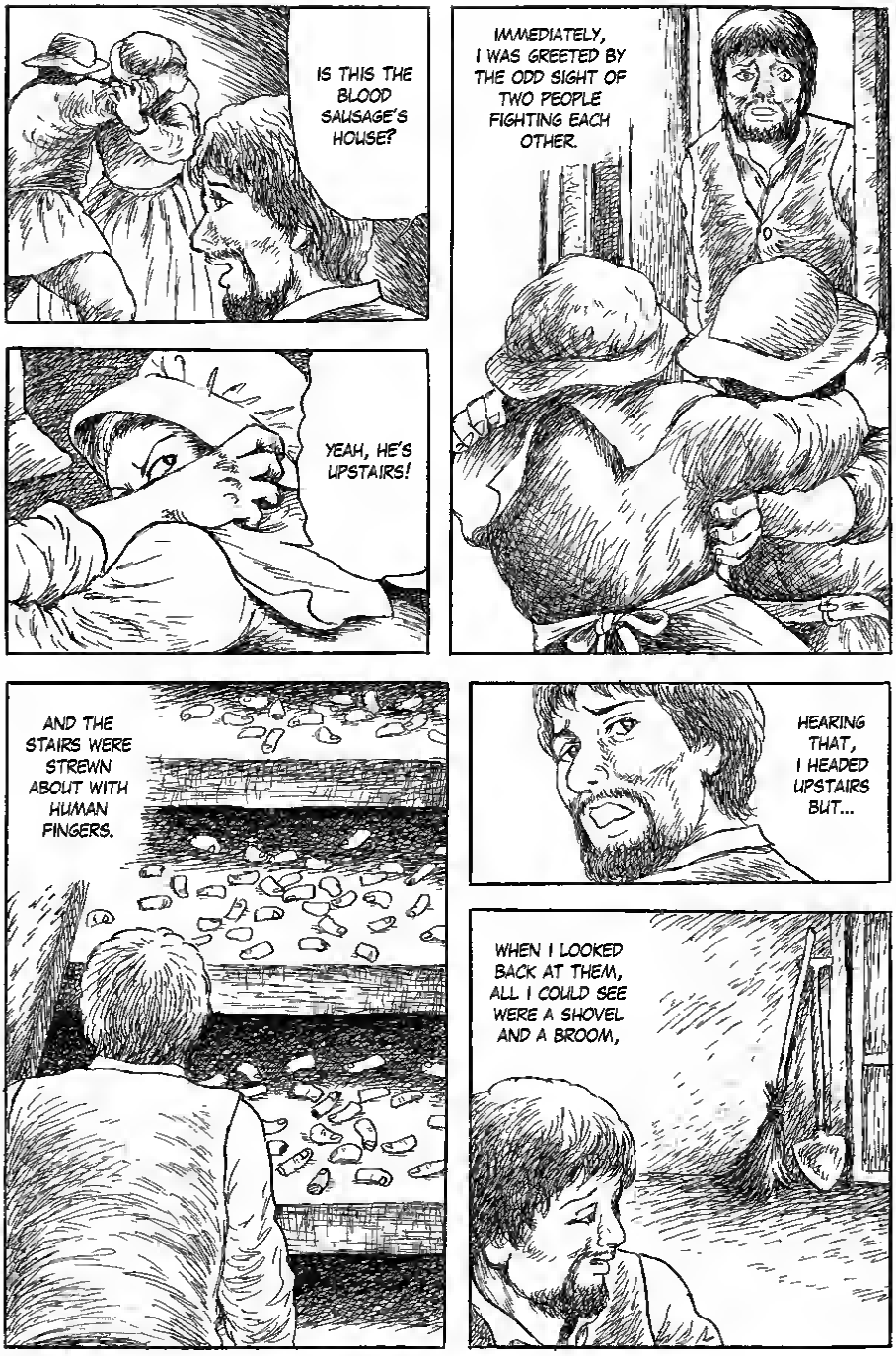


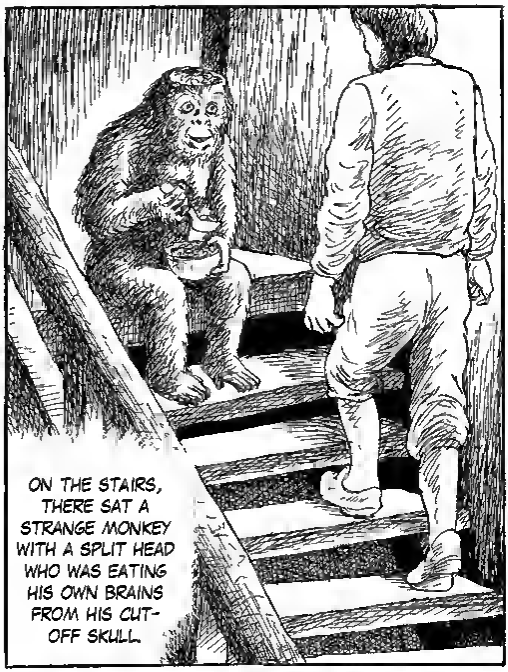

BUT THIS WHOLE INCIDENT HAD STARTED OFF STRANGELY, RIGHT FROM THE VERY INVITATION LETTER.
Dear Liver Sausage,
I cordially invite you to a feast.
-Blood Sausage-
HUH? LIVER SAUSAGE? WHO'S THAT SUPPOSED TO BE? IS THIS LETTER SUPPOSED TO BE FOR ME?

WHEN I CAME TO THE PLACE, A VERY STRANGE HOUSE STOOD BEFORE ME.

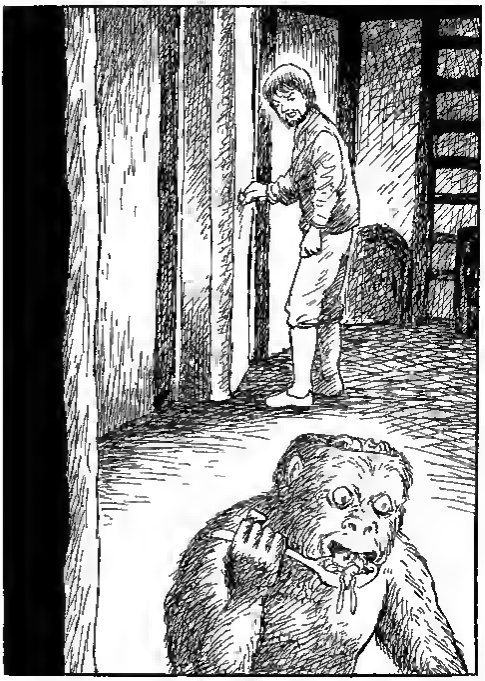

IT'S NOT OFTEN YOU GET INVITED TO A FEAST FOR FREE, AFTER ALL.
BUT STILL I WENT.

WHEN I ASKED MY WIFE ABOUT IT, SHE REPLIED INDIFFERENTLY, "WELL, THE LETTER CAME TO YOU, DIDN'T IT? WHO ELSE COULD IT BE FOR?"
AND MORE IMPORTANTLY, I DIDN'T EVEN KNOW WHO THIS BLOOD SAUSAGE MAN WAS.


IS THIS THE BLOOD SAUSAGE'S HOUSE?
IMMEDIATELY, I WAS GREETED BY THE ODD SIGHT OF TWO PEOPLE FIGHTING EACH OTHER.
YEAH, HE'S UPSTAIRS!
AND THE STAIRS WERE STREWN ABOUT WITH HUMAN FINGERS.
HEARING THAT, I HEADED UPSTAIRS BUT...
WHEN I LOOKED BACK AT THEM, ALL I COULD SEE WERE A SHOVEL AND A BROOM,

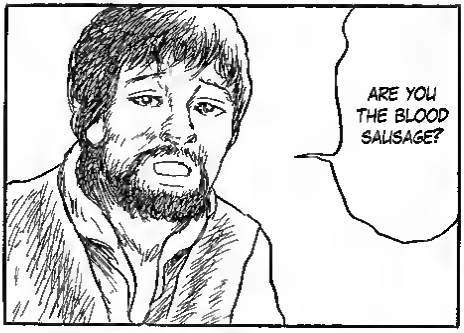

ON THE STAIRS, THERE SAT A STRANGE MONKEY WITH A SPLIT HEAD WHO WAS EATING HIS OWN BRAINS FROM HIS CUT-OFF SKULL.

JUST WHERE IS THIS BLOOD SAUSAGE?
HE'S FURTHER UPSTAIRS.



Y-YOU MEAN THE BLOOD SAUSAGE?

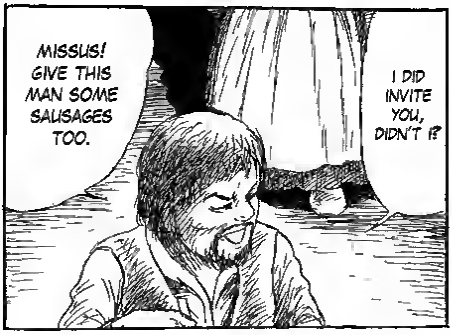
YES, HE'S UPSTAIRS.


ARE YOU THE BLOOD SAUSAGE?

AFTER HEADING UP ONE MORE TIME, I SAW A MAN EATING SAUSAGES.

YES, THAT'S RIGHT.
DON'T JUST STAND THERE DAZED AND CONFUSED. SIT DOWN ALREADY.

HAVE SOME WINE. THE MAIN DISH WILL COME OUT IN JUST A BIT.
HELP YOURSELF TO SOME SAUSAGES IN THE MEAN TIME. I JUST CAN'T START OFF ANYTHING RIGHT WITHOUT HAVING SOME SAUSAGES FIRST. DON'T YOU FEEL THE SAME WAY?


I DID INVITE YOU, DIDN'T I?
MISSUS! GIVE THIS MAN SOME SAUSAGES TOO.

THIS IS A... PRETTY STRANGE PLACE YOU GOT. I SAW SOME WEIRD THINGS ON MY WAY UP HERE.
LIKE WHAT?
BUT, UMM...
W-WELL... I DO LIKE SAUSAGES...
WHAT?
AND THERE WERE HUMAN FINGERS STREWN ABOUT ON THE STAIRS.
WHAT, WAS THIS YOUR FIRST TIME SEEING BURDOCK ROOTS?
YOU DUMBHEAD, THAT WAS JUST MY MAID AND SERVANT.
AT THE ENTRANCE, I SAW TWO PEOPLE FIGHTING, BUT WHEN I TURNED AROUND FOR A SECOND, I COULD ONLY SEE A SHOVEL AND A BROOM.
AFTER ALL, THE THINGS I SAW WERE FAR TOO STRANGE TO ACTUALLY HAVE BEEN REAL...
STRANGELY ENOUGH, HIS REPLIES MADE ME THINK THAT I REALLY HAD BEEN MISTAKEN.
JUST THE MISSUS DOZING OFF, I BET.
THERE WAS ALSO THIS MONKEY ON THE STAIRS EATING HIS OWN BRAINS.

HEY, MISSUS! WHAT THE HELL ARE YOU DOING!? BRING SOME DAMN SAUSAGES OUT ALREADY, WE'VE GOT A GUEST!
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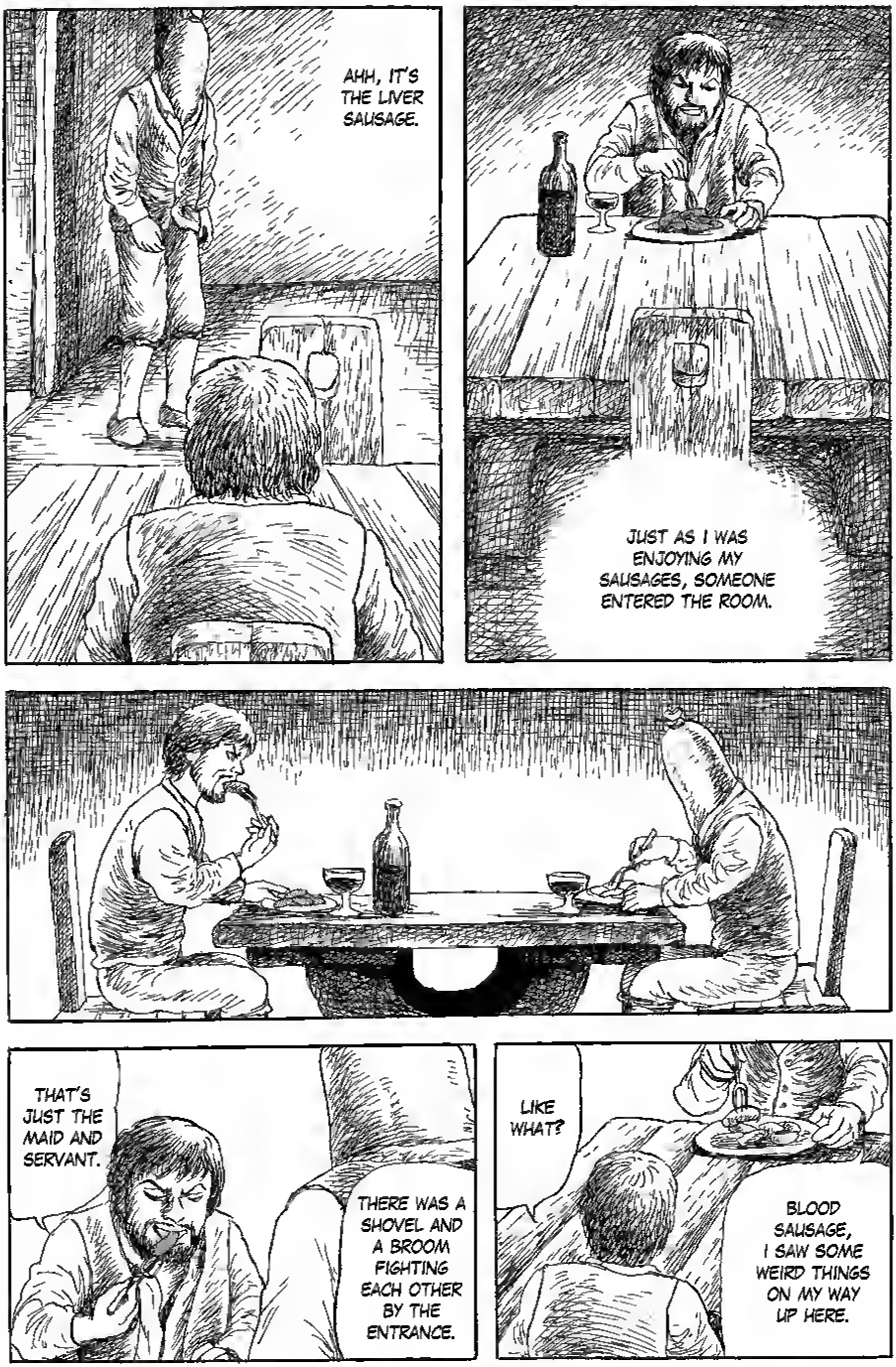
AND THE MAN STARTED WOLFING DOWN THE SAUSAGES AGAIN.
THE MISSUS SCOOPED OUT THE SAUSAGES,

HEY! AREN'T YA GONNA GIVE OUR GUEST SOME SAUSAGES TOO!?
OH, SO YOU KNOW YOUR SAUSAGES, EH? YEAH, I JUST LOVE BLOOD SAUSAGES.
ARE THOSE BLOOD SAUSAGES?
MY HEAD TURNED BLANK AND BEFORE I COULD WONDER WHAT SHE WAS DOING BEHIND ME,
THE PLATE IN FRONT OF ME WAS FILLED WITH SAUSAGES.
THE MISSUS SILENTLY WALKED BEHIND ME AND I FELT A CHILL SENT DOWN MY SPINE.
THEY WOULDN'T HAPPEN TO BE FROM INSIDE MY HEAD, WOULD THEY NOW?
THAT'S ONE HELL OF A WEIRD QUESTION, ALRIGHT. WHY WOULD SAUSAGES COME OUT FROM YOUR HEAD?
WHERE'RE THESE UHH, S-SAUSAGES FROM?
S-SORRY FOR ALL THE WEIRD QUESTIONS BUT, UMM...

OH CALM DOWN. I'LL FEED YOU SOME BLOOD SAUSAGES IN TIME IF YOU WANT THEM SO MUCH.
AND IN YOUR LETTER, YOU CALLED ME "LIVER SAUSAGE," WHILE YOU'RE THE BLOOD SAUSAGE.
Y-YOU HAVE A POINT BUT... LOOK, YOU'VE GOT BLOOD SAUSAGES WHILE I'VE GOT LIVER SAUSAGES.
O-OKAY... LOOK, I'M NOT FEELING SO WELL SO LET ME JUST GET SOME FRESH AIR AND COME BACK...
I FELT SICK. PERHAPS I HAD WANDERED INTO A PLACE I WAS NEVER MEANT TO COME...

SOMETHING STRANGE CAME OVER ME WHEN I SAW HIM...
FORGETTING MY EARLIER QUEASINESS, I CALLED OUT TO HIM.
HE WAS A SAUSAGE WEARING THE SAME SHABBY CLOTHES I WAS.
JUST THEN, I SAW SOMEONE COME UPSTAIRS.
SEEING THE PANICKED SAUSAGE HIDE BEHIND THE DOOR, I ALMOST BURST OUT LAUGHING.
HEY, LIVER SAUSAGE! YOU'RE IN A BLOODY MURDEROUS TRAP! YOU BETTER GET OUT OF HERE IF YOU VALUE YOUR LIFE!

ON THE STAIRS WERE BURDOCK ROOTS AND THE MISSUS DOZING OFF AGAIN.
DOWN-STAIRS, THE MAID AND THE SERVANT WERE GOSSIPING.
ESPECIALLY BLOOD SAUSAGES...
AND I HAD THE STRANGEST HANKERING FOR SAUSAGES.
AFTER A BREATH OF FRESH AIR, I FELT SUR-PRISINGLY GREAT.
HEY, MISSUS! HOW LONG ARE YA PLANNIN' TO DOZE OFF FOR!? BRING ME A PLATE FULL OF SAUSAGES!
SO I QUICKLY HEADED UPSTAIRS AND CALLED FOR THE MISSUS!


AHH, IT'S THE LIVER SAUSAGE.
JUST AS I WAS ENJOYING MY SAUSAGES, SOMEONE ENTERED THE ROOM.
THAT'S JUST THE MAID AND SERVANT.
THERE WAS A SHOVEL AND A BROOM FIGHTING EACH OTHER BY THE ENTRANCE.
LIKE WHAT?
BLOOD SAUSAGE, I SAW SOME WEIRD THINGS ON MY WAY UP HERE.

YOU DOZING OFF AGAIN!? BRING OUT SOME MORE SAUSAGES ALREADY!
THERE WAS ALSO THIS MONKEY ON THE STAIRS EATING HIS OWN BRAINS.
WHAT, WAS THIS YOUR FIRST TIME SEEING BURDOCK ROOTS?
THERE WERE HUMAN FINGERS STREWN ABOUT THE STAIRS.
BUT THE LIVER SAUSAGE KEPT QUESTIONING ME. IT SEEMED HE WAS GROWING SUSPICIOUS.
HA, LOOK AT THIS DUMB BASTARD. WHEN I GET TIRED OF THESE BLOOD SAUSAGES, I'M GOING TO FEAST ON YOU...
TAKE IT EASY IN THE MEAN WHILE. I'LL BE BACK SOON.
I'M GONNA GO CHECK UP ON THE MISSUS IN THE KITCHEN TO SEE HOW THE MAIN DISH IS COMING ALONG.
AND SO I THOUGHT IT WOULD BE BEST TO TAKE CARE OF HIM QUICKLY.

WHOA-
DAMN, DID I DRINK TOO MUCH WINE? MY HEAD IS POUNDING...
THE BLOOD SAUSAGES SPILLED OUT FROM MY HEAD AND ONTO THE FLOOR.
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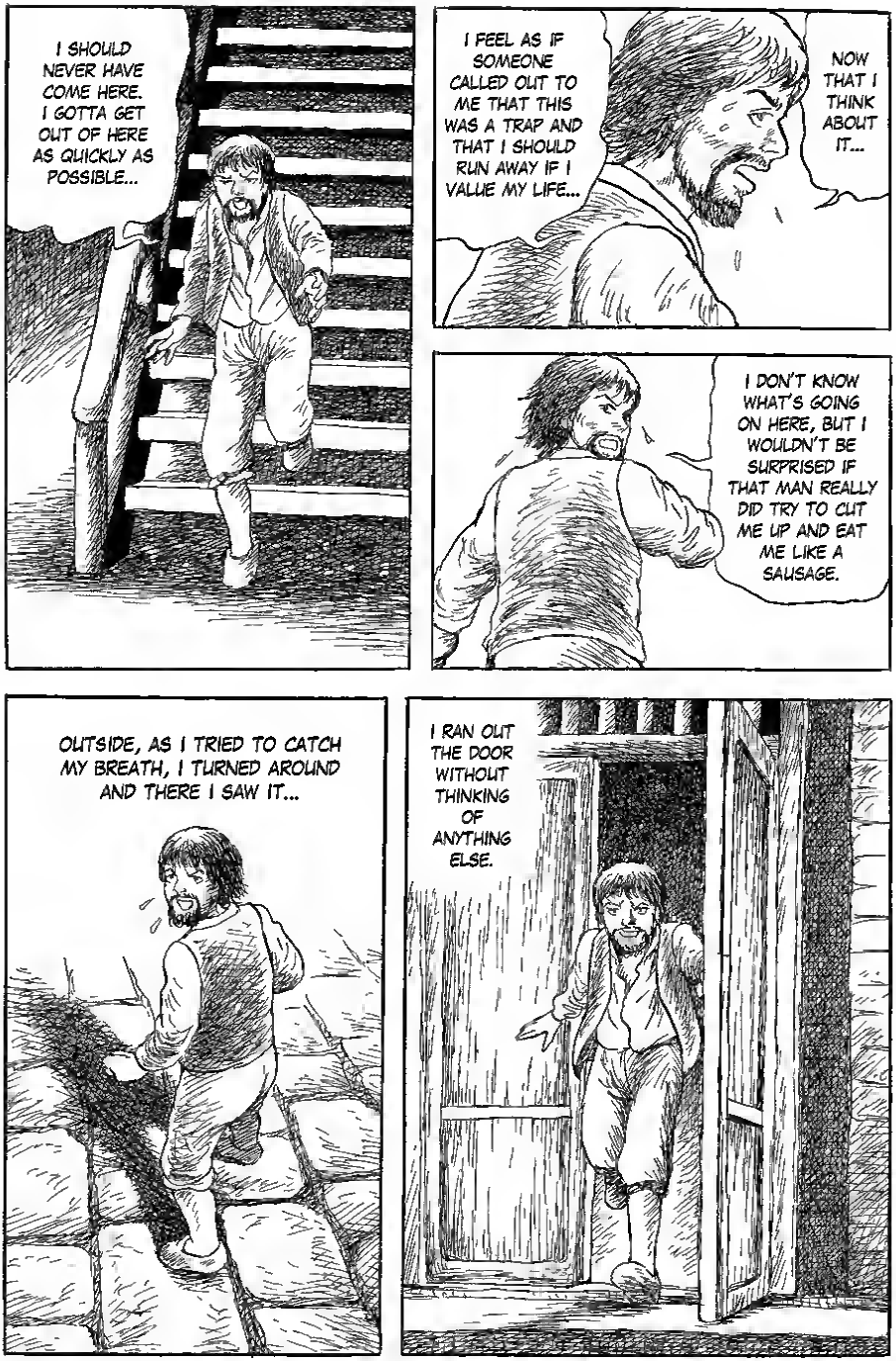
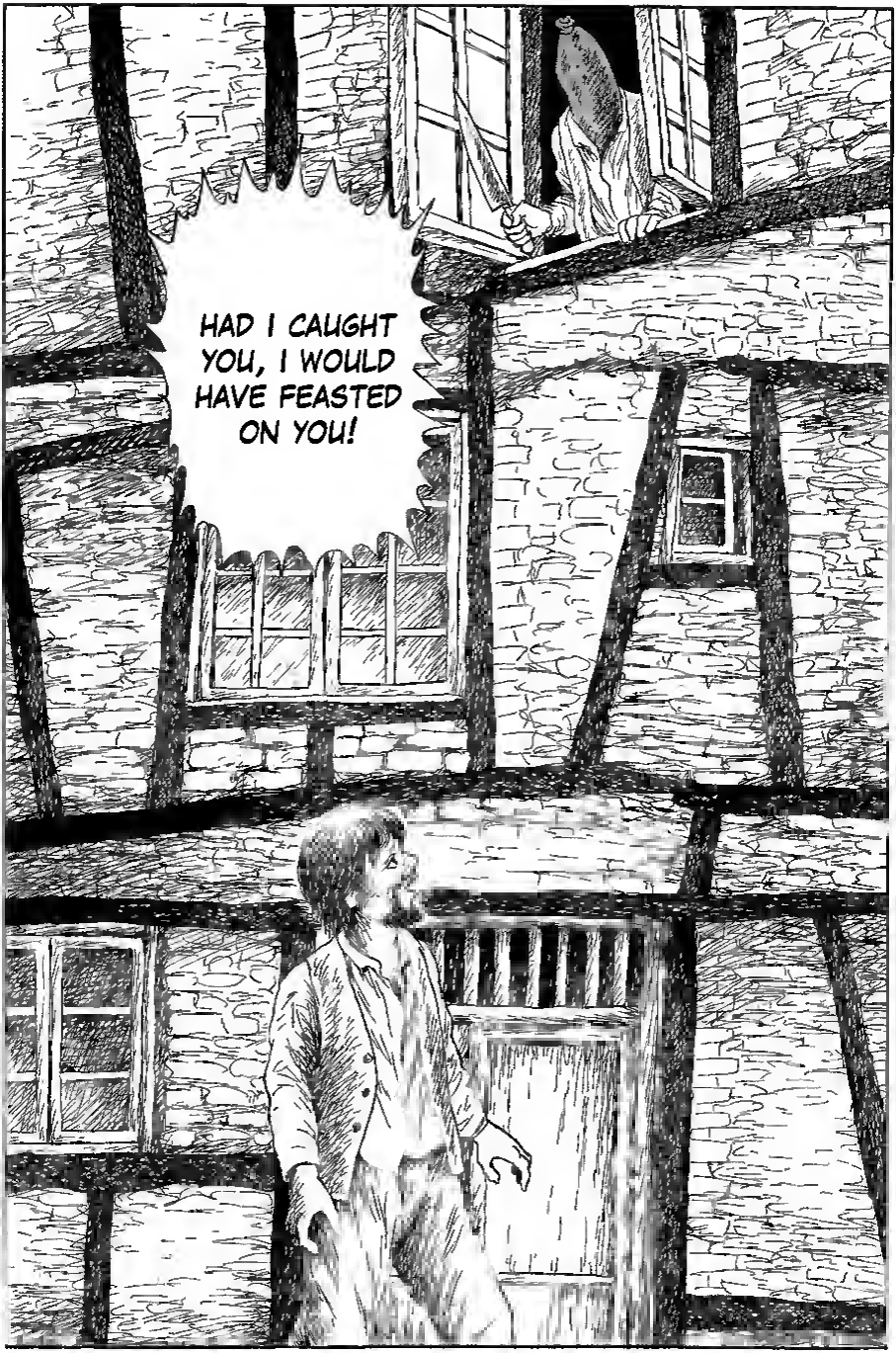
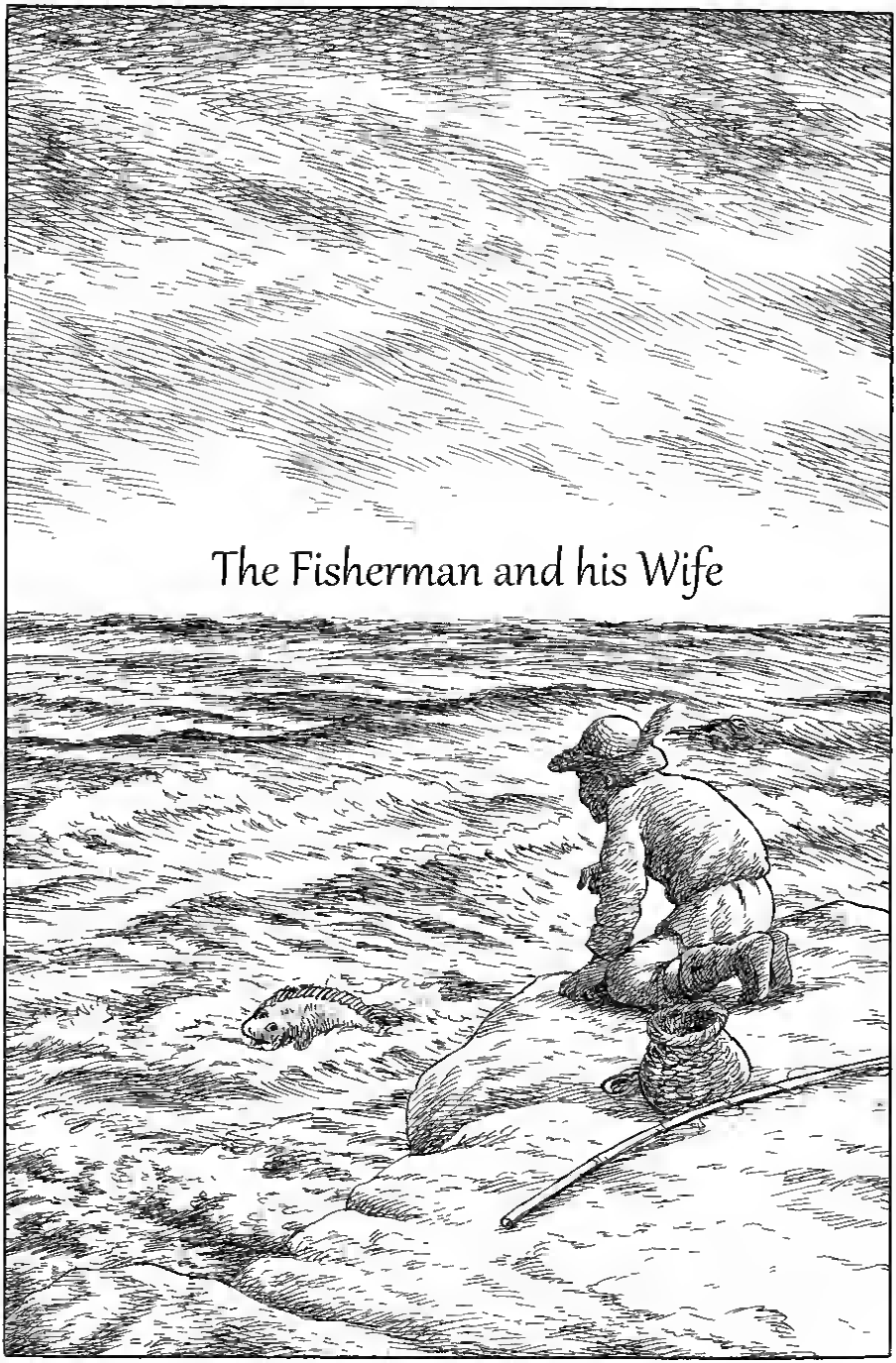
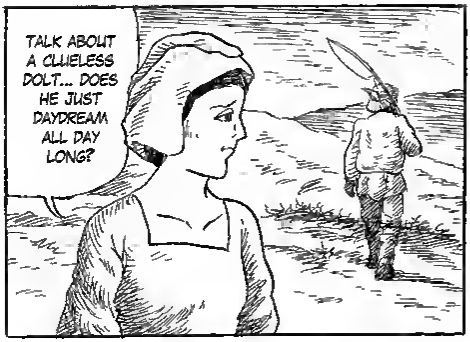
AH RIGHT, NOW'S NOT THE TIME TO BE JUST STANDING AROUND HERE LIKE THIS.
UGHH... LOOKS LIKE I REALLY DID DRINK TOO MUCH.
SUDDENLY, THE POUNDING IN MY HEAD STOPPED.

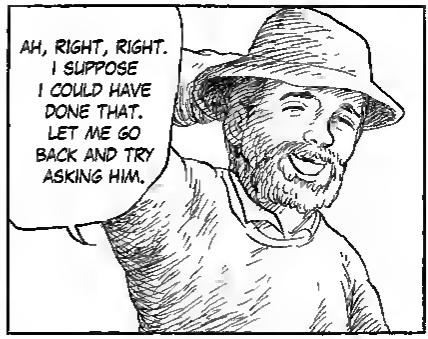

I SHOULD NEVER HAVE COME HERE. I GOTTA GET OUT OF HERE AS QUICKLY AS POSSIBLE...
I FEEL AS IF SOMEONE CALLED OUT TO ME THAT THIS WAS A TRAP AND THAT I SHOULD RUN AWAY IF I VALUE MY LIFE...
NOW THAT I THINK ABOUT IT...
I DON'T KNOW WHAT'S GOING ON HERE, BUT I WOULDN'T BE SURPRISED IF THAT MAN REALLY DID TRY TO CUT ME UP AND EAT ME LIKE A SAUSAGE.
OUTSIDE, AS I TRIED TO CATCH MY BREATH, I TURNED AROUND AND THERE I SAW IT...
I RAN OUT THE DOOR WITHOUT THINKING OF ANYTHING ELSE.


HAD I CAUGHT YOU, I WOULD HAVE FEASTED ON YOU!


The Fisherman and his Wife

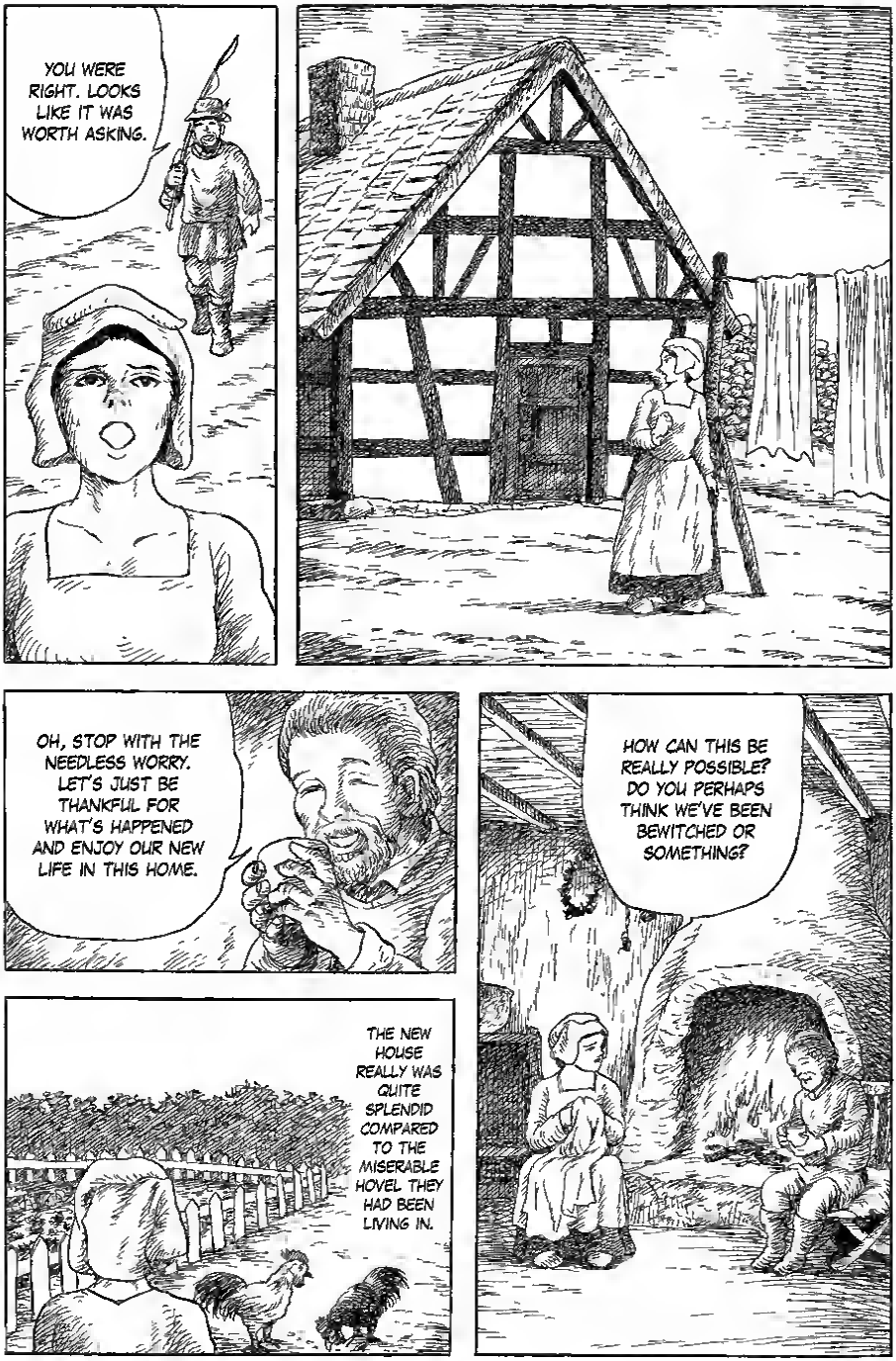
ONCE UPON A TIME, THERE LIVED A FISHERMAN AND HIS WIFE IN A MISERABLE HOVEL BY THE SEA. ALTHOUGH THE WIFE HAD LONG LOST HER AFFECTIONS FOR HER UNDEPENDABLE HUSBAND, SEEING NO OTHER OPTIONS, SHE HAD RESIGNED HERSELF TO HER LOT IN LIFE.
DID YOU CATCH ANY FISH TODAY?
NOPE, NOTHIN' TODAY. ACTUALLY, I DID CATCH ONE FLOUNDER, BUT HE COULD TALK IF YOU CAN BELIEVE THAT.
HE TOLD ME HE WAS ACTUALLY AN ENCHANTED PRINCE SO I DECIDED TO LET HIM GO.
A MAGIC FISH? WELL, COULDN'T YOU HAVE AT LEAST ASKED FOR SOMETHING LIKE A PROPER COTTAGE IN RETURN FOR LETTING HIM GO?

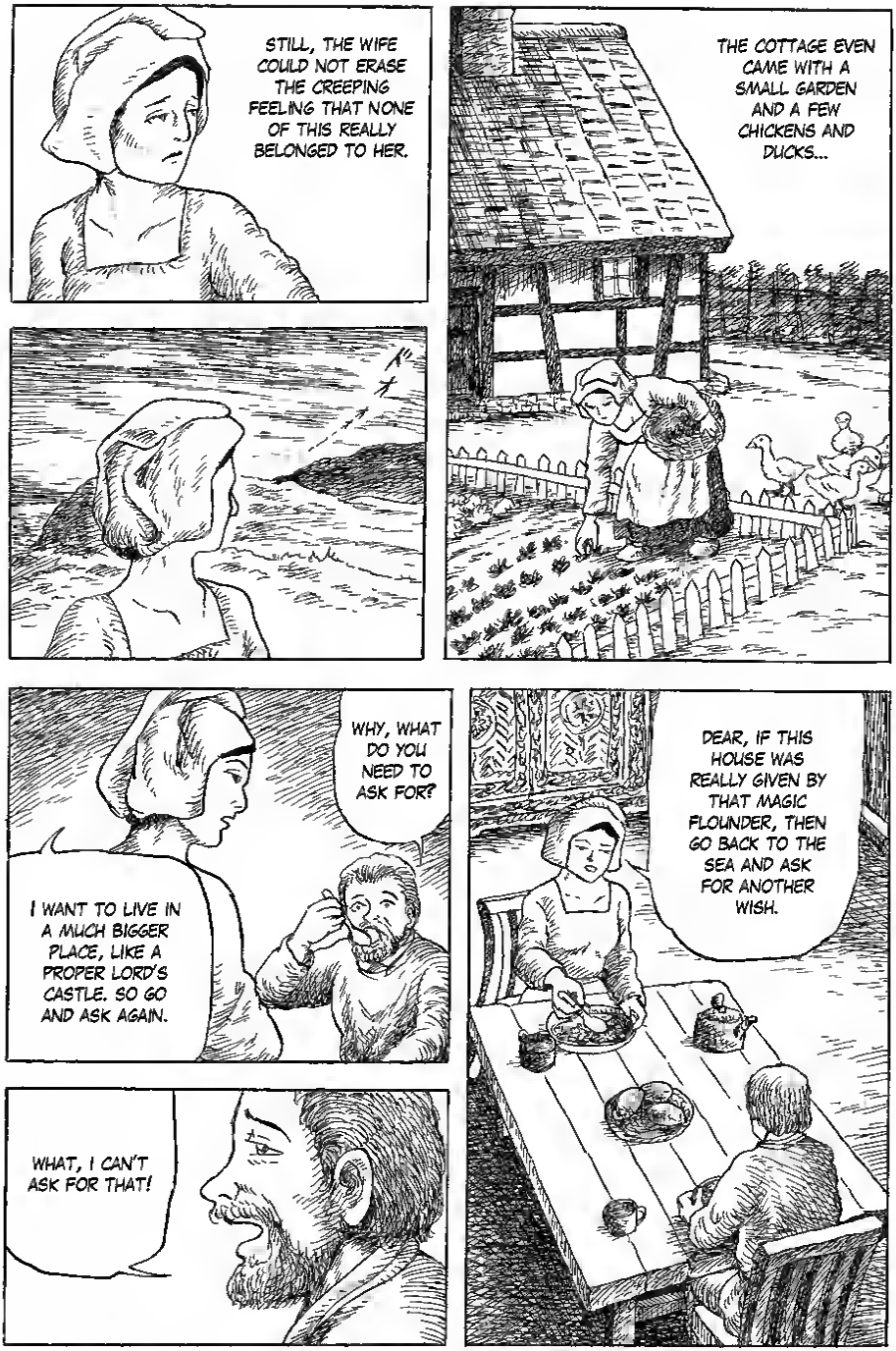

TALK ABOUT A CLUELESS DOLT... DOES HE JUST DAYDREAM ALL DAY LONG?


AH, RIGHT, RIGHT. I SUPPOSE I COULD HAVE DONE THAT. LET ME GO BACK AND TRY ASKING HIM.

AND WHEN SHE TURNED AROUND...

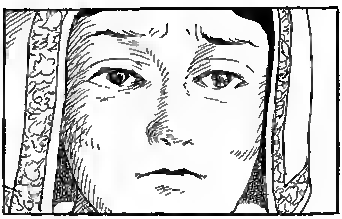
THE WIFE HAD AN EERIE FEELING WHEN SHE HEARD A WAIL FROM THE SEA.


YOU WERE RIGHT. LOOKS LIKE IT WAS WORTH ASKING.
OH, STOP WITH THE NEEDLESS WORRY. LET'S JUST BE THANKFUL FOR WHAT'S HAPPENED AND ENJOY OUR NEW LIFE IN THIS HOME.
HOW CAN THIS BE REALLY POSSIBLE? DO YOU PERHAPS THINK WE'VE BEEN BEWITCHED OR SOMETHING?
THE NEW HOUSE REALLY WAS QUITE SPLENDID COMPARED TO THE MISERABLE HOVEL THEY HAD BEEN LIVING IN.

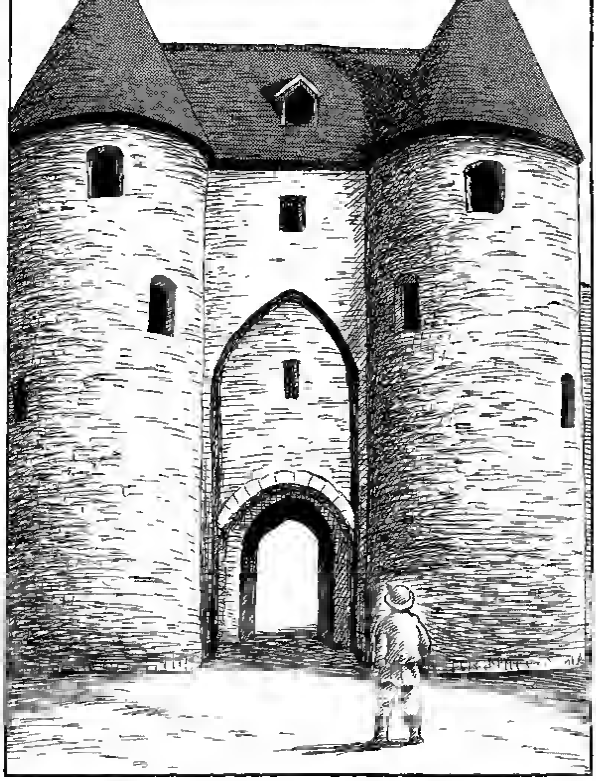

STILL, THE WIFE COULD NOT ERASE THE CREEPING FEELING THAT NONE OF THIS REALLY BELONGED TO HER.
THE COTTAGE EVEN CAME WITH A SMALL GARDEN AND A FEW CHICKENS AND DUCKS...
WHY, WHAT DO YOU NEED TO ASK FOR?
I WANT TO LIVE IN A MUCH BIGGER PLACE, LIKE A PROPER LORD'S CASTLE. SO GO AND ASK AGAIN.
DEAR, IF THIS HOUSE WAS REALLY GIVEN BY THAT MAGIC FLOUNDER, THEN GO BACK TO THE SEA AND ASK FOR ANOTHER WISH.
WHAT, I CAN'T ASK FOR THAT!

OH BE QUIET AND DO AS I SAY! IF IT REALLY IS A MAGIC FLOUNDER, THEN IT SHOULD BE SIMPLE ENOUGH TO GRANT US THAT!

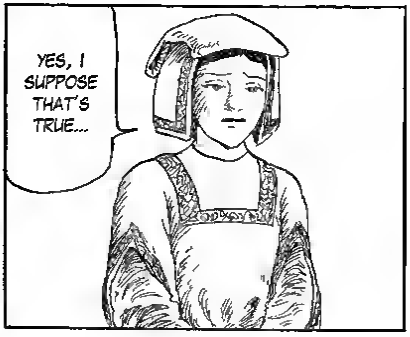
UPON REOPENING HER EYES AFTER TRYING TO BLOCK OFF THE WAIL FROM THE SEA, THE WIFE SAW THAT SHE NOW LIVED IN A CASTLE.

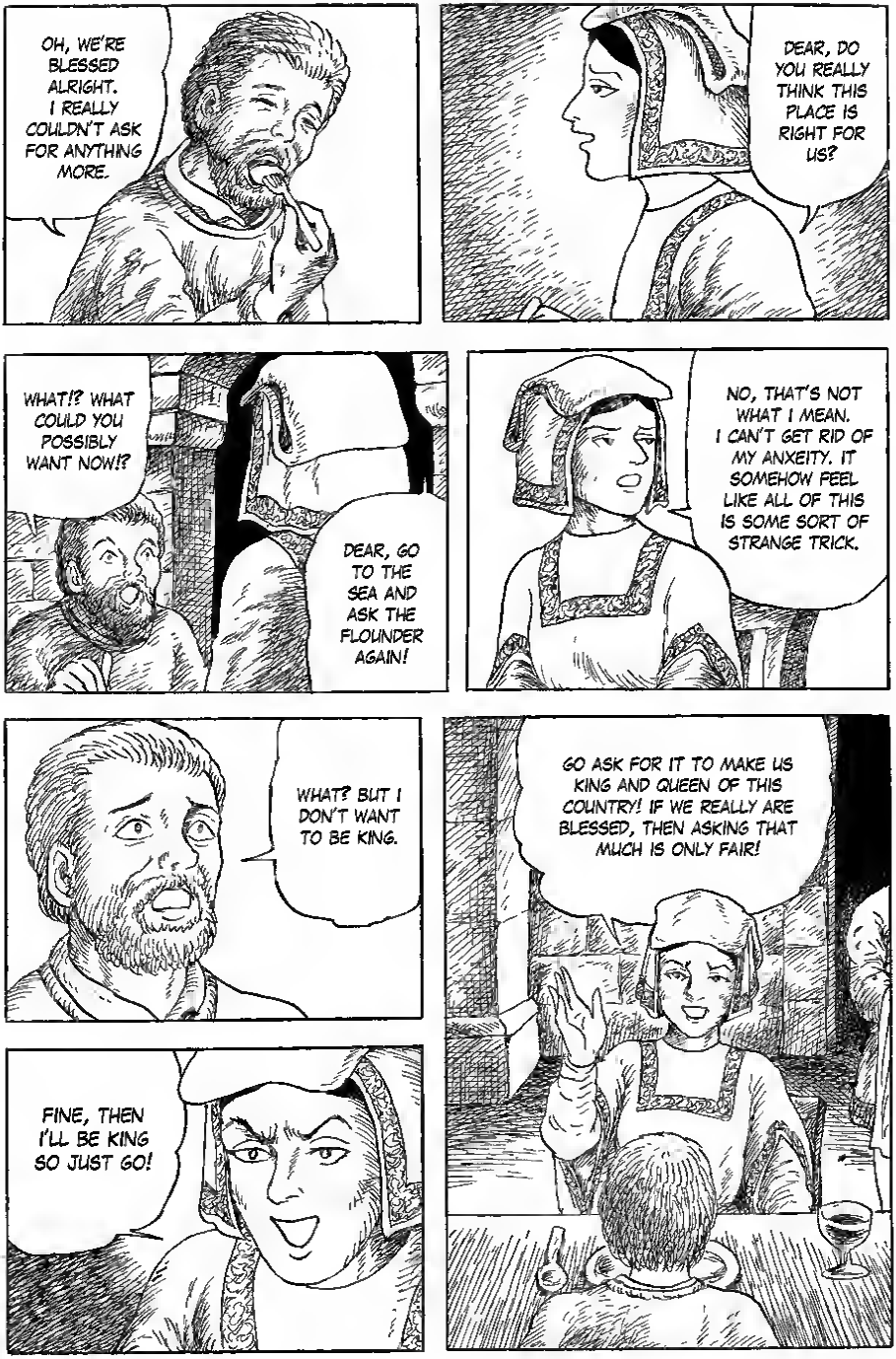


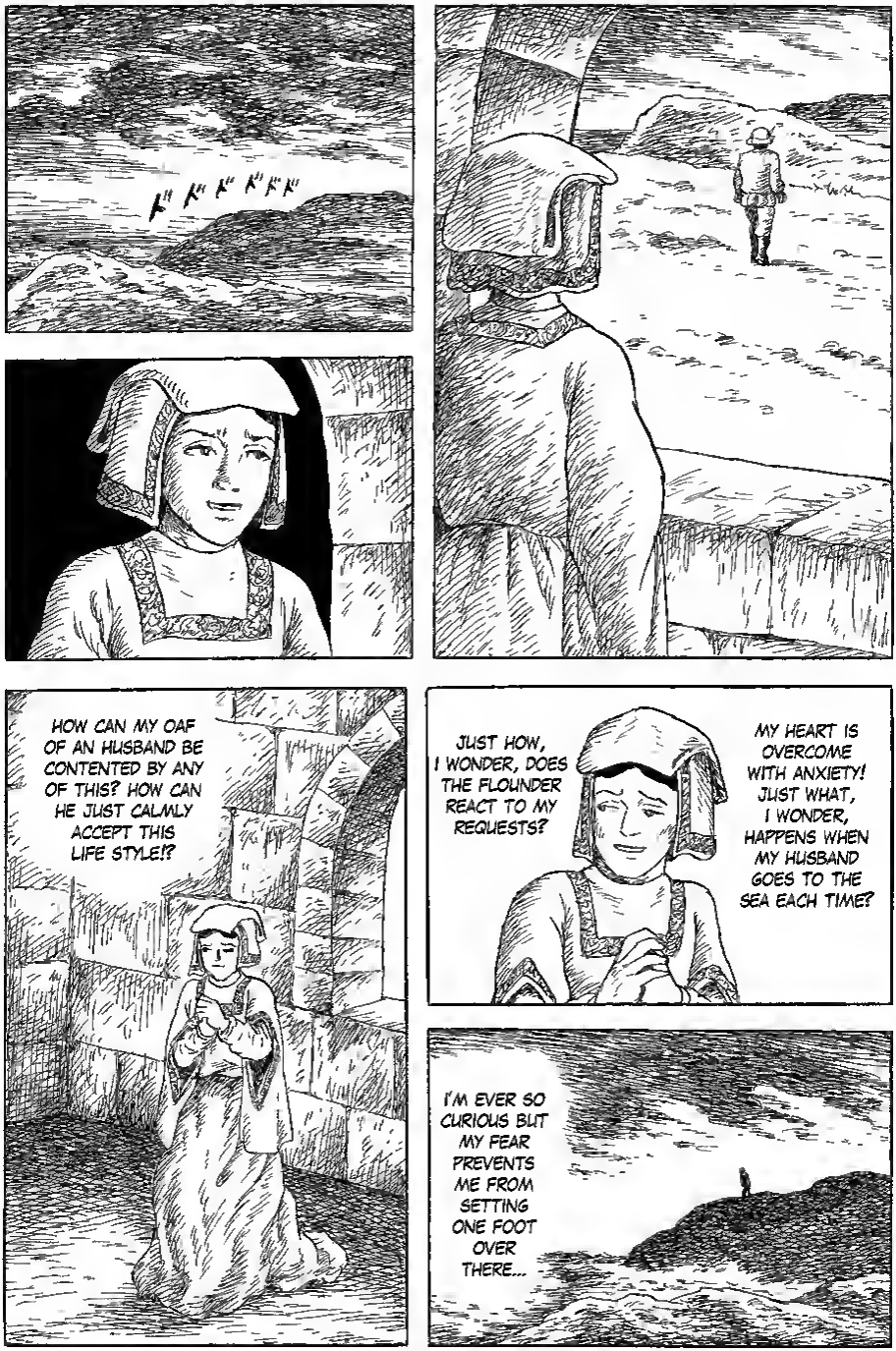
WELL WOULD YOU LOOK AT THIS! IT'S A REAL CASTLE!



YOU SHOULD BE SATISFIED WITH THIS THEN, RIGHT? THIS IS MORE THAN LUXURIOUS ENOUGH FOR US.


YES, I SUPPOSE THAT'S TRUE...


OH, WE'RE BLESSED ALRIGHT. I REALLY COULDN'T ASK FOR ANYTHING MORE.
DEAR, DO YOU REALLY THINK THIS PLACE IS RIGHT FOR US?
WHAT!? WHAT COULD YOU POSSIBLY WANT NOW!?
DEAR, GO TO THE SEA AND ASK THE FLOUNDER AGAIN!
NO, THAT'S NOT WHAT I MEAN. I CAN'T GET RID OF MY ANXEITY. IT SOMEHOW FEEL LIKE ALL OF THIS IS SOME SORT OF STRANGE TRICK.
WHAT? BUT I DON'T WANT TO BE KING.
GO ASK FOR IT TO MAKE US KING AND QUEEN OF THIS COUNTRY! IF WE REALLY ARE BLESSED, THEN ASKING THAT MUCH IS ONLY FAIR!
FINE, THEN I'LL BE KING SO JUST GO!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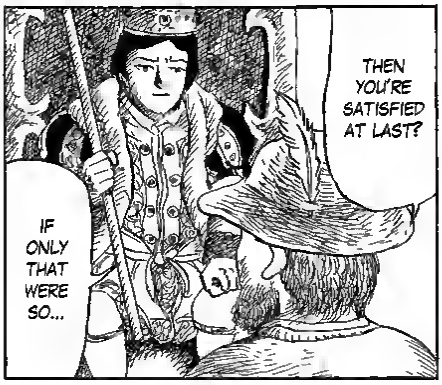
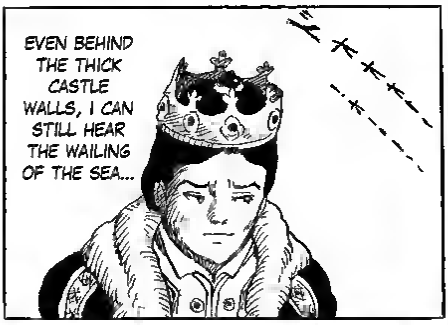
HOW CAN MY OAF OF AN HUSBAND BE CONTENTED BY ANY OF THIS? HOW CAN HE JUST CALMLY ACCEPT THIS LIFE STYLE!?
JUST HOW, I WONDER, DOES THE FLOUNDER REACT TO MY REQUESTS?
MY HEART IS OVERCOME WITH ANXIETY! JUST WHAT, I WONDER, HAPPENS WHEN MY HUSBAND GOES TO THE SEA EACH TIME?
I'M EVER SO CURIOUS BUT MY FEAR PREVENTS ME FROM SETTING ONE FOOT OVER THERE...

YES, I AM THE KING NOW.


THEN YOU'RE SATISFIED AT LAST?
IF ONLY THAT WERE SO...

SO YOU'VE BECOME KING.

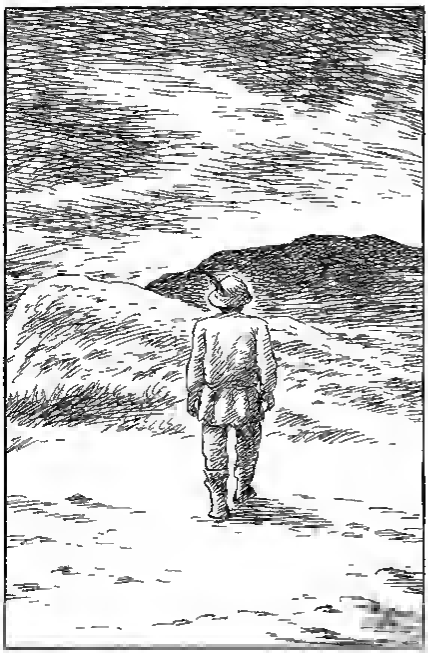
I WANT YOU TO GO ASK THE FLOUNDER AGAIN.
WHAT DO YOU NEED TO ASK THIS TIME?
GOD!? HOW DO YOU KNOW ALL THIS ISN'T THE WORK OF THE DEVIL!? NOW QUIT COMPLAINING AND GO ALREADY!
I WISH TO BECOME EMPEROR! NOW GO QUICKLY!
YOU REALLY SHOULD STOP WISHING FOR MORE. WE SHOULD BE THANKFUL TO GOD FOR LISTENING TO SO MANY OF OUR REQUESTS ALREADY...

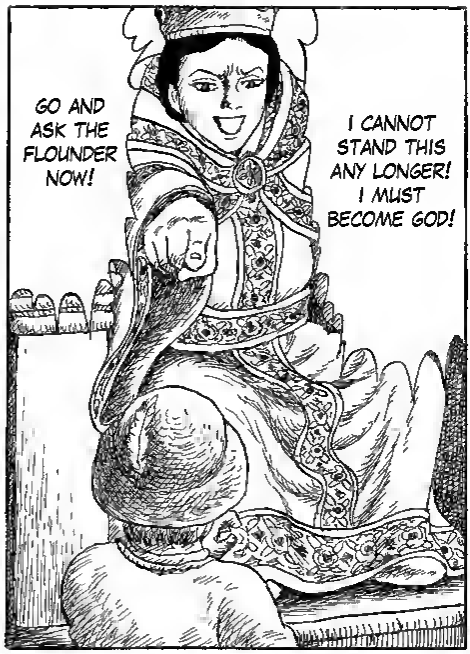

EVEN BEHIND THE THICK CASTLE WALLS, I CAN STILL HEAR THE WAILING OF THE SEA...

I WONDER WHAT MY HUSBAND IS SAYING TO THE FLOUNDER?
WH. T HAS THE SEA BECOME LIKE BY NOW? THE SKIES OVER IT MUST HAVE TURNED RED.

IT FEELS AS IF THIS VERY CASTLE WILL CRUMBLE AT ANY SECOND...
THE GRANDER MY HOUSE BECOMES, THE MORE OPULENT OUR LIVES BECOME, MY HEART IS WEIGHED DOWN WITH HEAVIER AND HEAVIER ANXIETY.

OHHH, WHAT MUST I BECOME TO ERASE THIS ANXIETY FOR GOOD?
HAVE YOU BECOME AN EMPEROR NOW?
I WANT TO BECOME LIKE GOD! NOW GO IMMEDIATELY!
GO ASK THE FLOUNDER ONCE MORE!
Y-YOU'RE ASKING FOR A DIVINE PUNISHMENT! THERE'S NO WAY SUCH A THING COULD BE ALLOWED!
BUT I JUST RETURNED...




GO AND ASK THE FLOUNDER NOW!
I CANNOT STAND THIS ANY LONGER! I MUST BECOME GOD!

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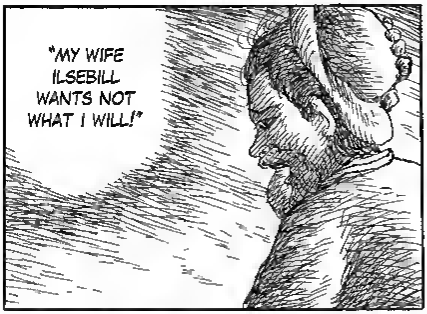
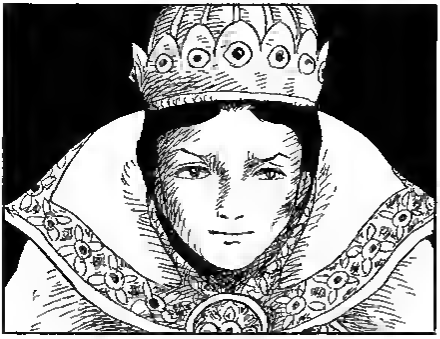
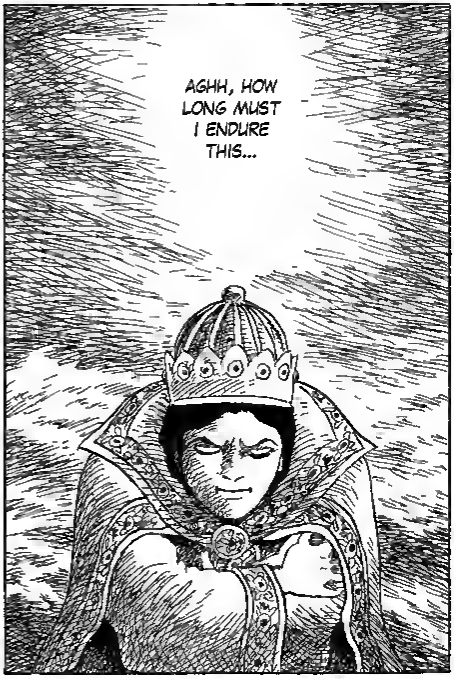
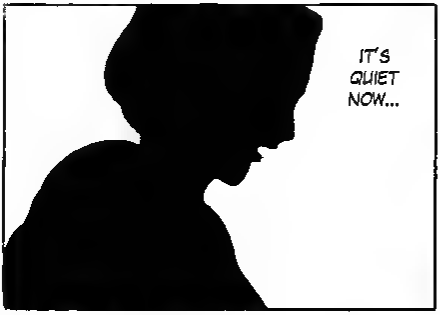
I CAN SEE HIM TELLING THE FLOUNDER ABOUT MY INSATIABLE GREED...

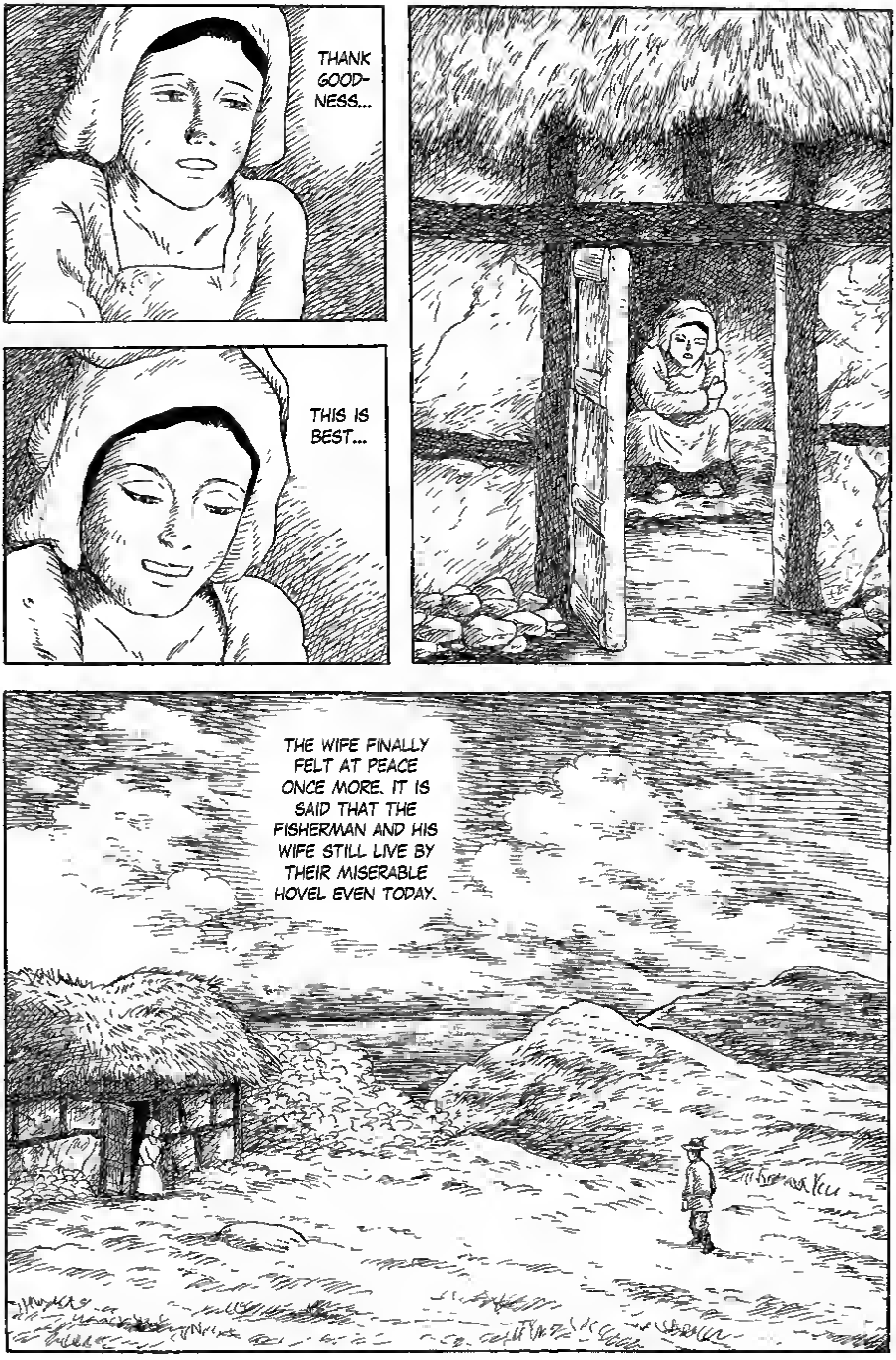
I CAN SEE IT CLEARLY NOW. THE FIGURE OF MY OAFISH HUSBAND IN THE CENTER OF A RAGING TEMPEST.


"MY WIFE ILSEBILL WANTS NOT WHAT I WILL!"



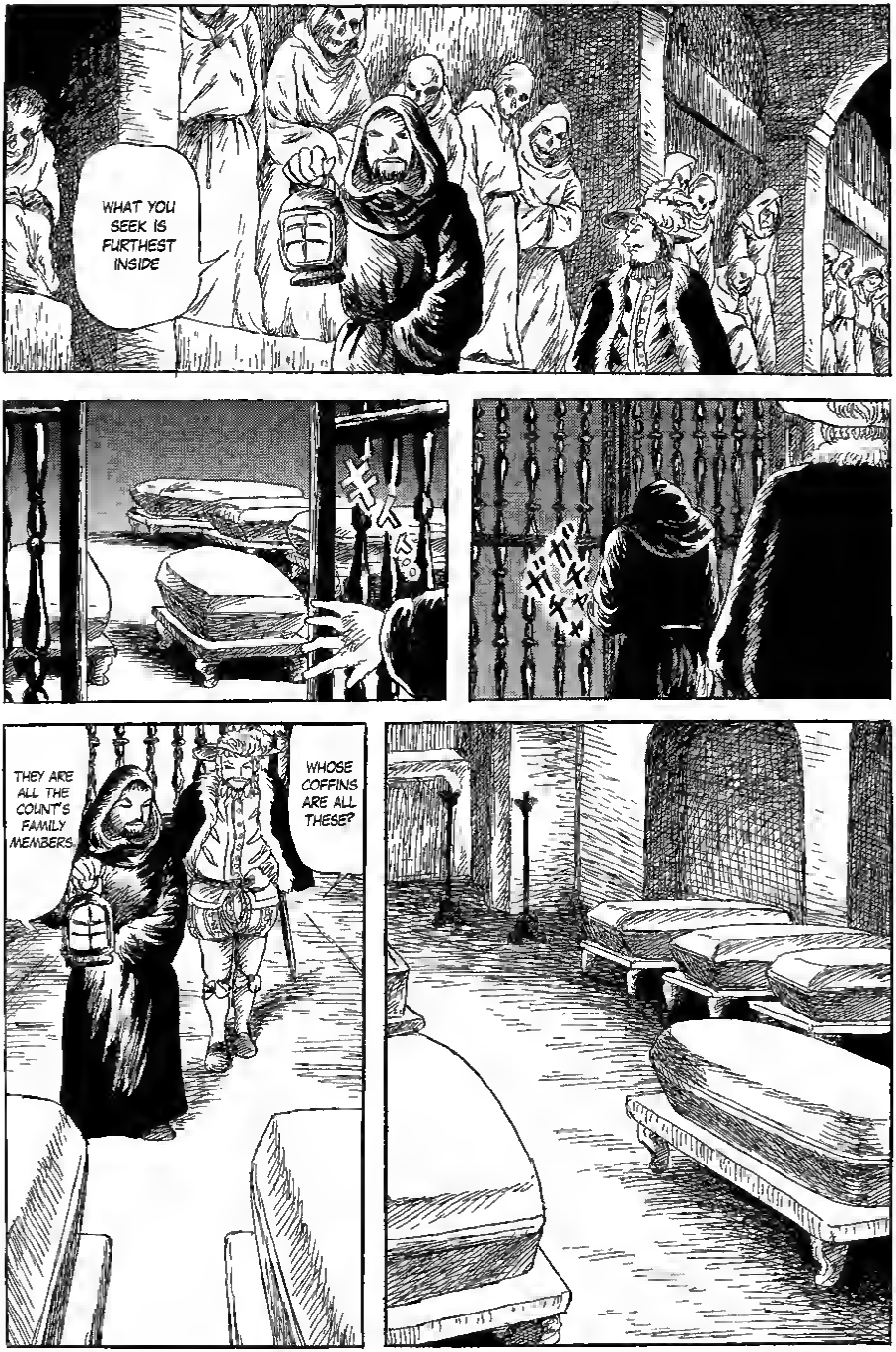

AGHH, HOW LONG MUST I ENDURE THIS...


IT'S QUIET NOW...


THANK GOOD-NESS...
THIS IS BEST...
THE WIFE FINALLY FELT AT PEACE ONCE MORE. IT IS SAID THAT THE FISHERMAN AND HIS WIFE STILL LIVE BY THEIR MISERABLE HOVEL EVEN TODAY.

Snow White

THIS WAY, SIR.
THIS ABBEY ONLY HAS 7 MONKS INCLUDING MYSELF, WHICH MAKES IT RATHER IMPOSSIBLE TO KEEP THIS ENTIRE PLACE CLEAN.
QUITE DUSTY HERE, IS IT NOT?


WHAT YOU SEEK IS FURTHEST INSIDE
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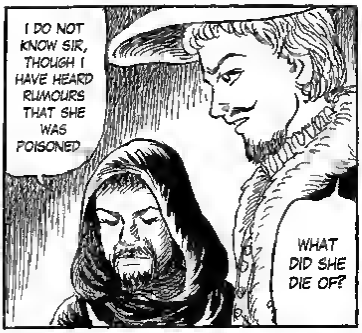
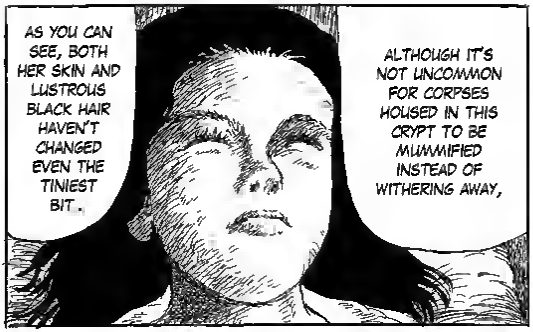
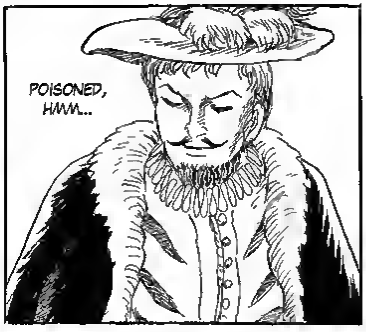
THEY ARE ALL THE COUNT'S FAMILY MEMBERS.
WHOSE COFFINS ARE ALL THESE?

BUT WHOM YOU SEEK IS THE COUNT'S DAUGHTER, HOUSED IN THERE...
THIS HOLDS THE COUNT'S WIFE...
OHH!
IT'S AS IF... SHE'S STILL ALIVE!
I BELIEVE 3 YEARS HAS PASSED SINCE OUR ABBEY FIRST RECEIVED HER.


I DO NOT KNOW SIR, THOUGH I HAVE HEARD RUMOURS THAT SHE WAS POISONED.
WHAT DID SHE DIE OF?


AS YOU CAN SEE, BOTH HER SKIN AND LUSTROUS BLACK HAIR HAVEN'T CHANGED EVEN THE TINIEST BIT.
ALTHOUGH IT'S NOT UNCOMMON FOR CORPSES HOUSED IN THIS CRYPT TO BE MUMMIFIED INSTEAD OF WITHERING AWAY,

NO, HE WAS BURIED IN A DIFFERENT PLACE IN ACCORDANCE TO HIS WILL.
IS THE COUNT HOUSED HERE AS WELL?


POISONED, HMM...

I DO NOT KNOW IF YOU'VE HEARD, BUT THE COUNT'S WIFE WAS A MOST BEAUTIFUL WOMAN.

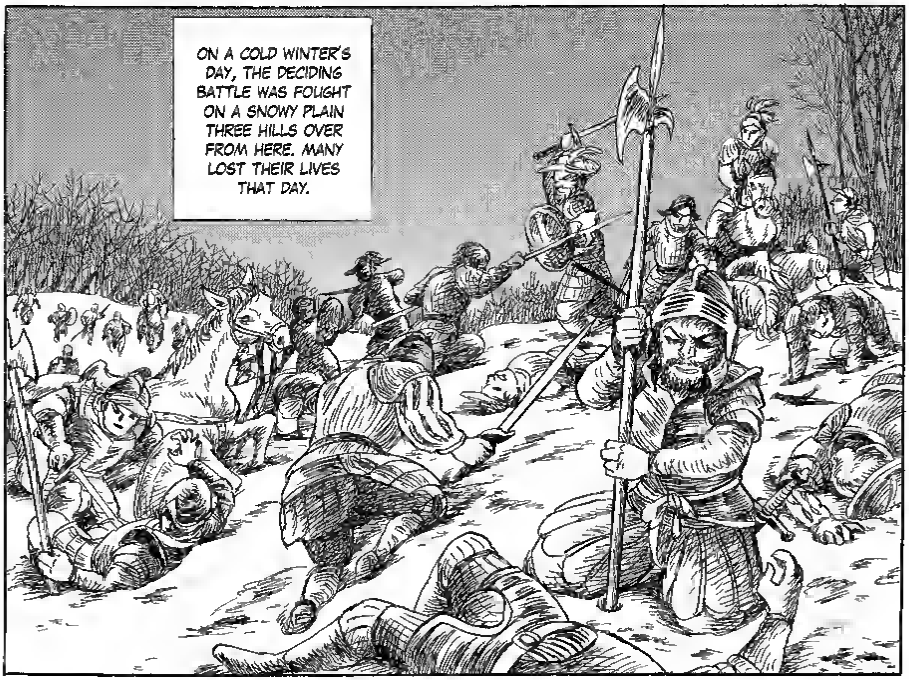
NONE CAN SAY FOR SURE... THERE ARE MANY MYSTERIES SURROUNDING THE DEATHS OF THE COUNT AND HIS DAUGHTER.
WHY IS THAT? WHAT DID HE EXACTLY WRITE IN HIS WILL?

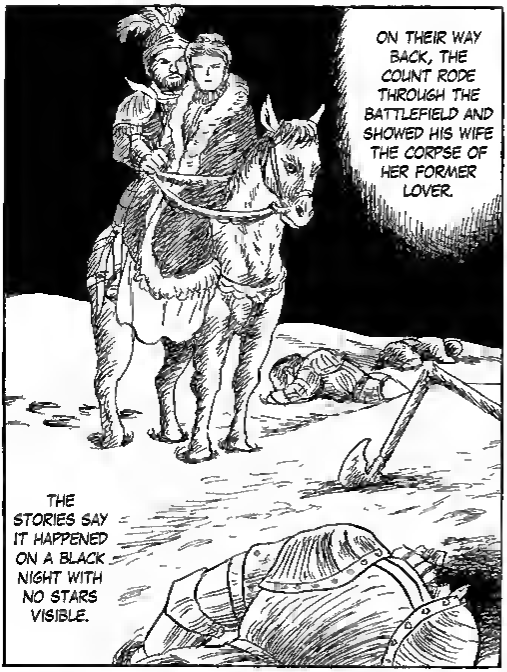
—THEN ALLOW ME TO EXPLAIN FROM THE BEGINNING.

WHAT DO YOU MEAN?

IN ORDER TO RETRIEVE HIS WIFE, THE COUNT RAISED AN ARMY AND INVADED THE NEIGHBOURING COUNTY. THE WAR RAGED ON FOR SOME MONTHS.

SHORTLY AFTER, THAT LORD DECIDED TO MAKE HER ONLY HIS WOMAN BY ABDUCTING HER WHEN SHE WENT FOR MASS ONE DAY.
BUT HER VERY BEAUTY BROUGHT ILL LUCK UPON HER. SHE CAUGHT THE EYE OF A NEIGHBOURING LORD AND THEY STARTED AN AFFAIR.

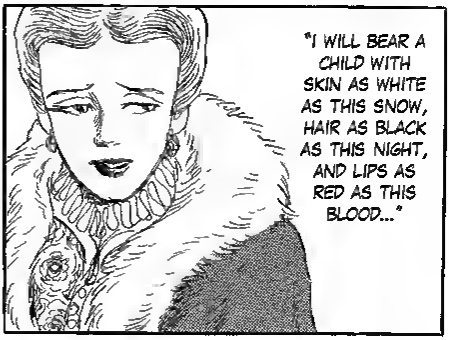

ON A COLD WINTER'S DAY, THE DECIDING BATTLE WAS FOUGHT ON A SNOWY PLAIN THREE HILLS OVER FROM HERE. MANY LOST THEIR LIVES THAT DAY.

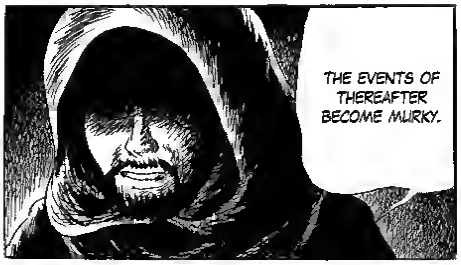

ON THEIR WAY BACK, THE COUNT RODE THROUGH THE BATTLEFIELD AND SHOWED HIS WIFE THE CORPSE OF HER FORMER LOVER.
THE STORIES SAY IT HAPPENED ON A BLACK NIGHT WITH NO STARS VISIBLE.

THE COUNT KILLED HIS ENEMY AT LAST AND RETRIEVED HIS WIFE.

SHE WAS ALREADY PREGNANT THEN,
AND A FEW MONTHS AFTER HER RETURN, SHE DIED GIVING BIRTH TO A DAUGHTER THAT LOOKED JUST AS SHE HAD PREDICTED.

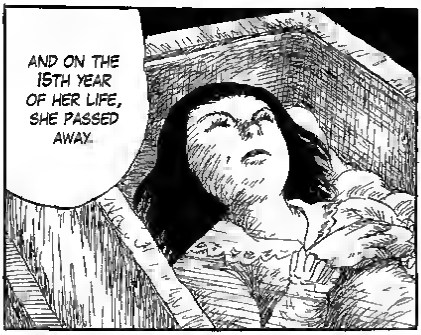
UPON SEEING HIS BLOODIED, DECAPITATED CORPSE, SHE SUPPOSEDLY SAID THUS:

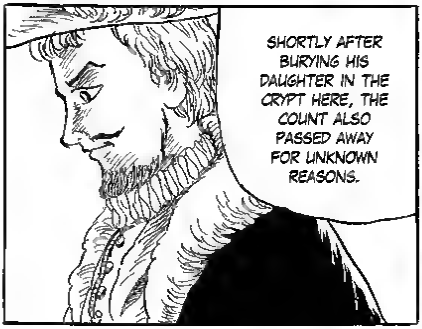

"I WILL BEAR A CHILD WITH SKIN AS WHITE AS THIS SNOW, HAIR AS BLACK AS THIS NIGHT, AND LIPS AS RED AS THIS BLOOD..."


THE EVENTS OF THEREAFTER BECOME MURKY.

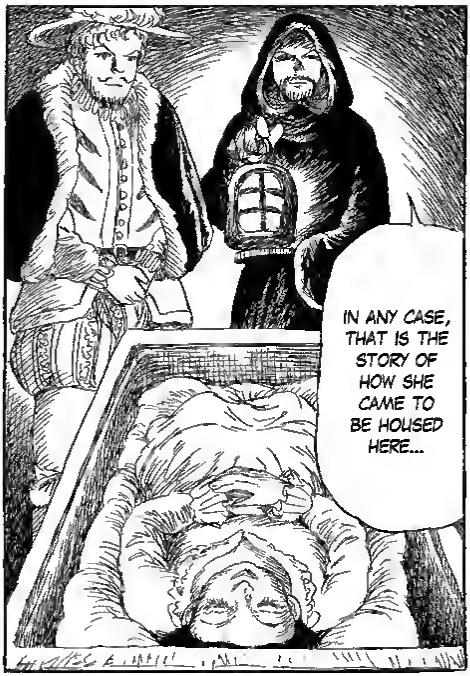
WHAT CAN BE SAID FOR CERTAIN IS THAT THE COUNT TOOK A NEW WIFE.

EVEN THOUGH THE COUNT KNEW THE BABY'S FATHER WAS HIS MOST HATED ENEMY, HE DECIDED TO RAISE HER AS HIS OWN IN LOVING MEMORY OF HIS WIFE.


AND ON THE 15TH YEAR OF HER LIFE, SHE PASSED AWAY.

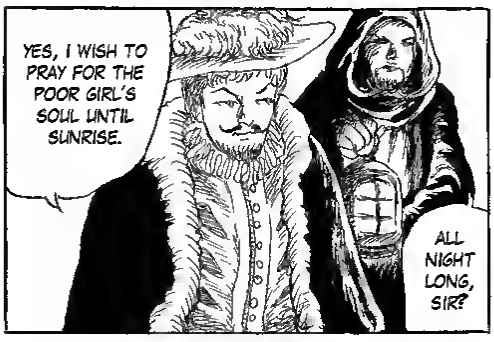

SHORTLY AFTER BURYING HIS DAUGHTER IN THE CRYPT HERE, THE COUNT ALSO PASSED AWAY FOR UNKNOWN REASONS.

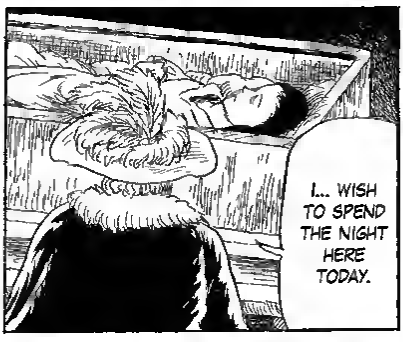
HIS NEW WIFE SUPPOSEDLY DISLIKED HOW BEAUTIFUL HIS DAUGHTER WAS... ACTUALLY NO, IT IS SAID THAT SHE ABSOLUTELY LOATHED HER...

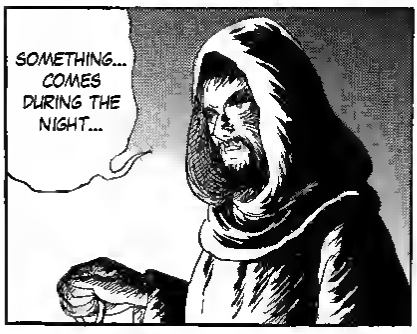

IN ANY CASE, THAT IS THE STORY OF HOW SHE CAME TO BE HOUSED HERE...

SOME SAY SHE WAS BANISHED, OTHERS SAY SHE WAS KILLED BY THE COUNT'S NEPHEW WHO SUCCEEDED AS THE NEW COUNT.
AND WHAT OF HIS SECOND WIFE?

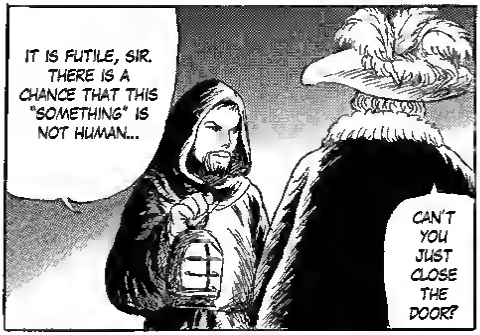
THERE ARE SOME WHO CLAIM SHE WAS EVEN A WITCH...

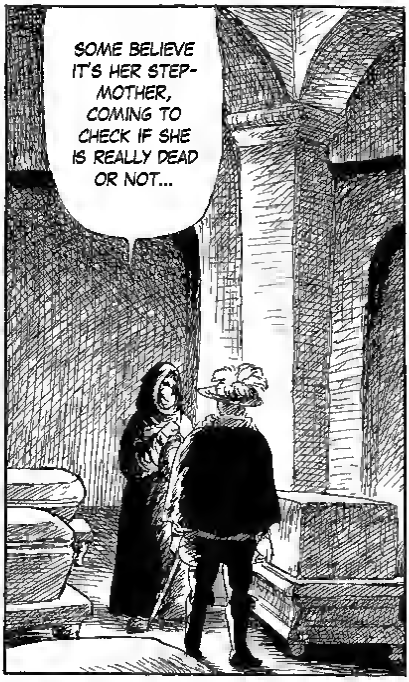

YES, I WISH TO PRAY FOR THE POOR GIRL'S SOUL UNTIL SUNRISE.
ALL NIGHT LONG, SIR?


I... WISH TO SPEND THE NIGHT HERE TODAY.


SOMETHING... COMES DURING THE NIGHT...

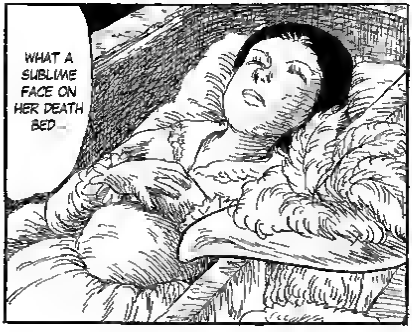
WHY?
I WOULD ADVISE AGAINST THAT, SIR...


IT IS FUTILE, SIR. THERE IS A CHANCE THAT THIS "SOMETHING" IS NOT HUMAN...
CAN'T YOU JUST CLOSE THE DOOR?

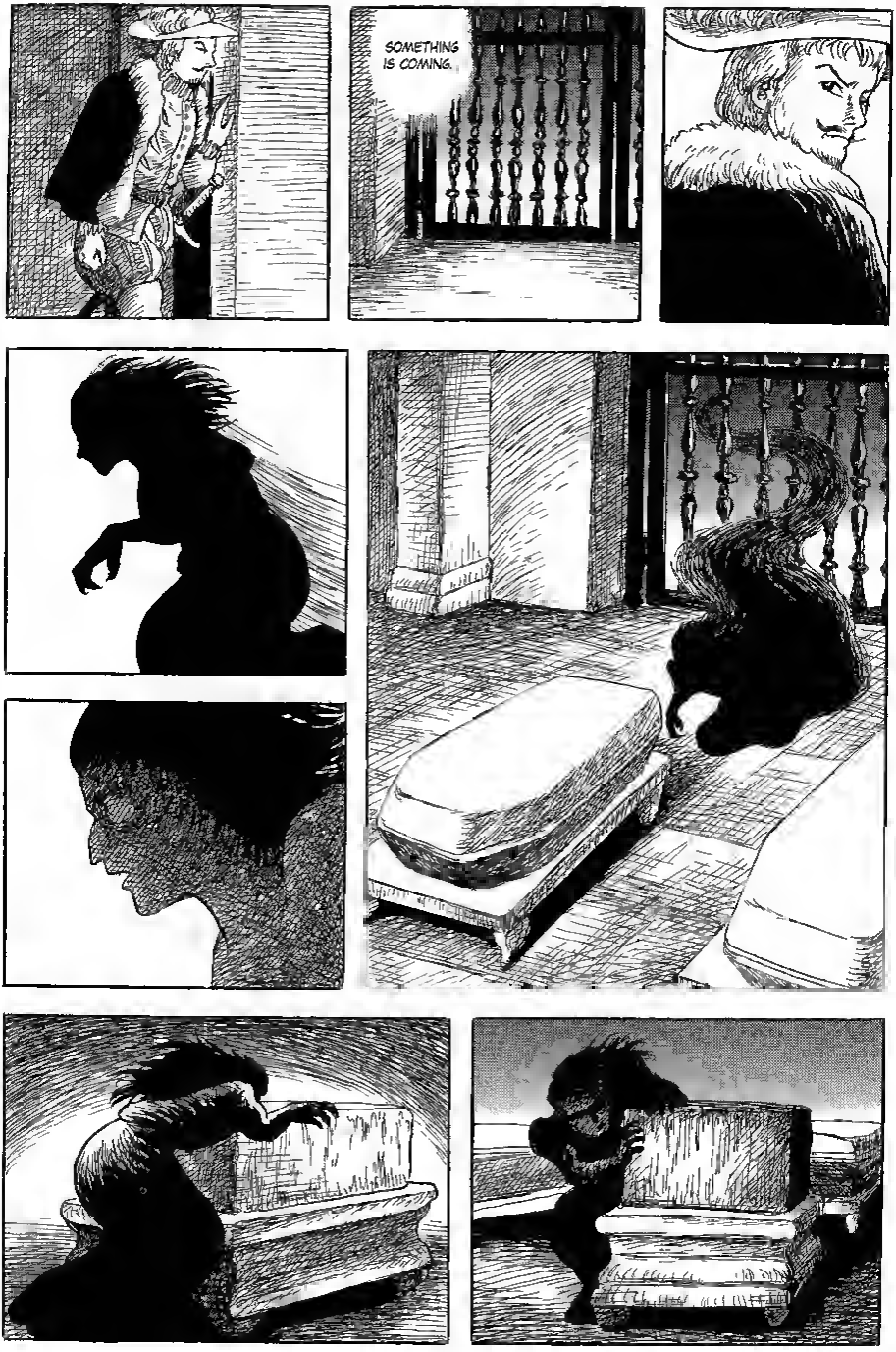

SOME BELIEVE IT'S HER STEP-MOTHER, COMING TO CHECK IF SHE IS REALLY DEAD OR NOT...

I CARE NOT. WITCH OR GHOST, I'LL CONFIRM THE NATURE OF THESE RUMOURS MYSELF.

PERHAPS THAT SECOND WIFE REALLY WAS A WITCH AS THE RUMOURS SAY...


WHAT A SUBLIME FACE ON HER DEATH BED...

I'VE NEVER SEEN SUCH BEAUTY AMONG THE LIVING NOR THE DEAD...
IS SHE REALLY DEAD...?


SOMETHING IS COMING.

WHISPER
WHISPER
THE DEAD SHOULD REMAIN DEAD..
THE DEAD SHOULD REMAIN DEAD..
DIE...
DIE
DIE...
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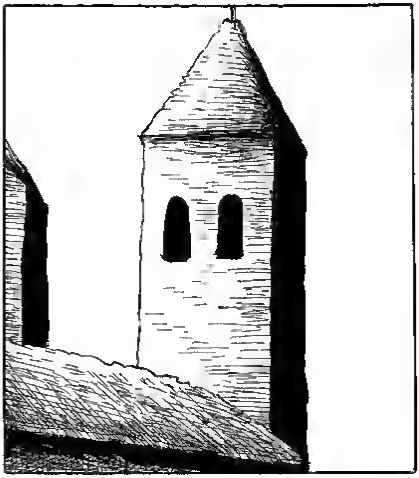
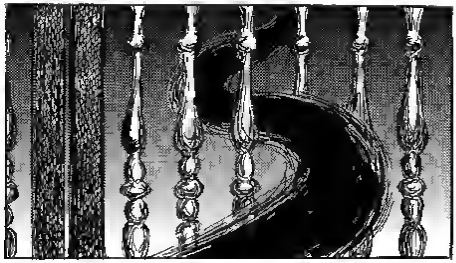
NO MATTER HOW MUCH YOU TRY TO EVADE ME, YOU CANNOT FOOL MY MIRROR...
THE DEAD MUST NOT IMITATE THE LIVING..

TWICE SHE RETURNED, BUT I SHAN'T FAIL THRICE! I WILL NOT LET YOU OUT OF MY SIGHTS UNTIL YOU WITHER AWAY INTO ASHES!
YOU AS WELL! I'VE KILLED YOUR DAUGHTER THRICE!
WHY DO YOU NOT WITHER? WHY DO YOU NOT ROT?
BUT STILL THAT FIGURE STIRS MY ANXIETY...
PERHAPS I SHOULD JUST BURN THIS PLACE DOWN ONCE AND FOR ALL...

BEGONE, WITCH!

FOOLISH MORTAL! BEWITCHED ARE YOUR VERY EYES! DO YOU WISH TO JOIN THE DEAD!?

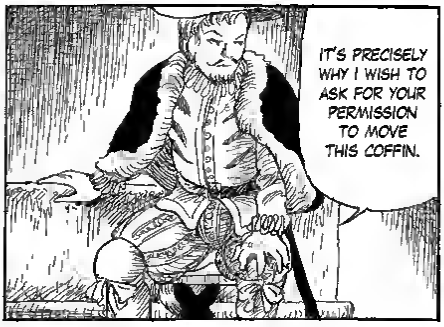


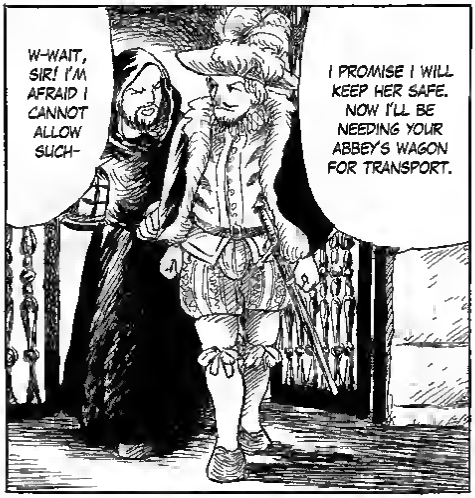


YES.
DID ANYTHING HAPPEN?

OF COURSE, I MEAN TO INCLUDE THE CORPSE INSIDE IT AS WELL... WILL YOU GRANT MY REQUEST?

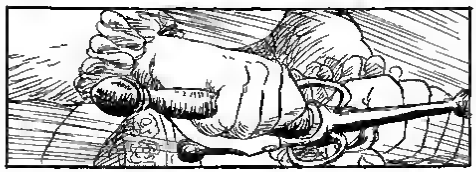
THE COFFIN? WHAT DO YOU MEAN?


IT'S PRECISELY WHY I WISH TO ASK FOR YOUR PERMISSION TO MOVE THIS COFFIN.

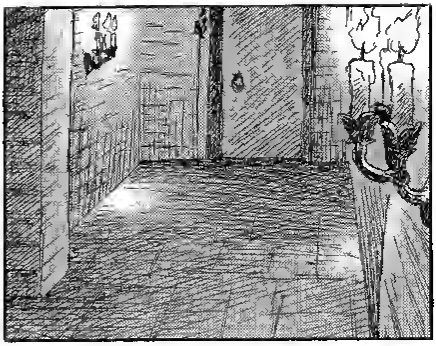

W-WAIT, SIR! I'M AFRAID I CANNOT ALLOW SUCH-
I PROMISE I WILL KEEP HER SAFE. NOW I'LL BE NEEDING YOUR ABBEY'S WAGON FOR TRANSPORT.

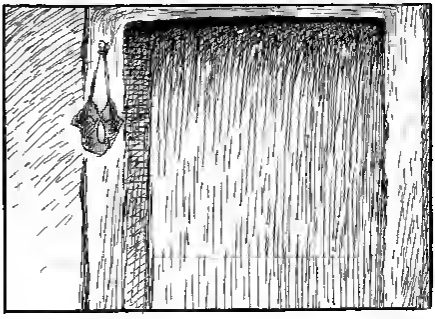
W-WHAT DO YOU PLAN TO DO WITH HER CORPSE...?

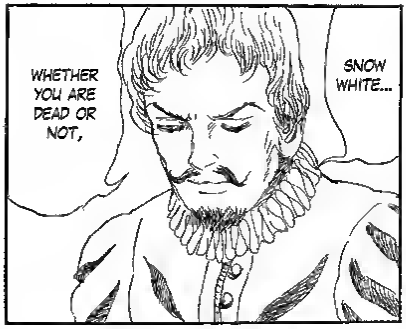
WORRY NOT, I WILL TREAT HER AS I WOULD A LIVING WIFE... NAY, EVEN BETTER.
I CANNOT LEAVE HER HERE.

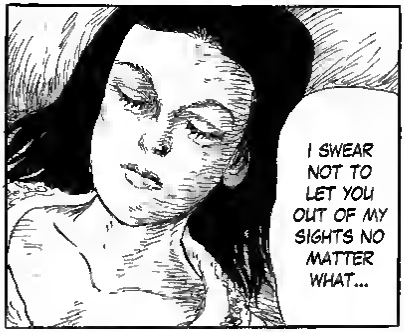


バタ
バタバタ
THE ABBOT IS...!

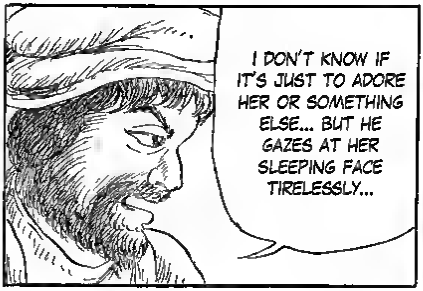




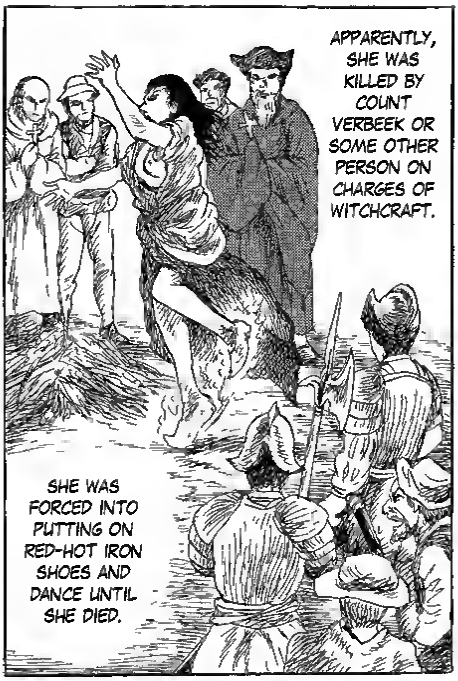

WHETHER YOU ARE DEAD OR NOT,
SNOW WHITE...

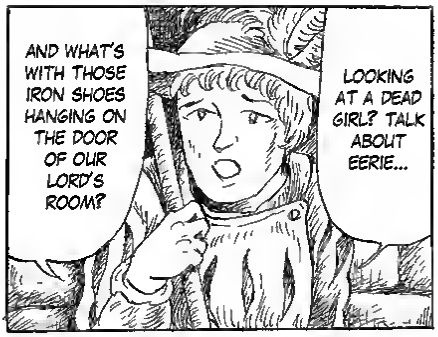

I SWEAR NOT TO LET YOU OUT OF MY SIGHTS NO MATTER WHAT...

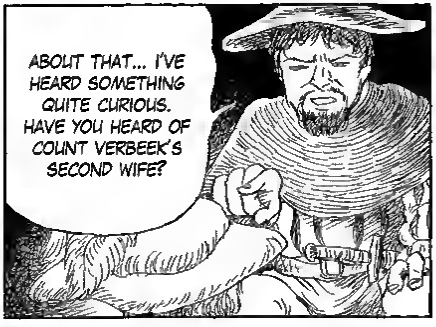
THE STORY ABOUT OUR LORD BRINGING BACK THE CORPSE OF A YOUNG GIRL TO ADORE EVERY NIGHT...?
SSHHH! DON'T GO AROUND SAYING THAT ALOUD.


I DON'T KNOW IF IT'S JUST TO ADORE HER OR SOMETHING ELSE... BUT HE GAZES AT HER SLEEPING FACE TIRELESSLY...

IS THAT STORY TRUE?

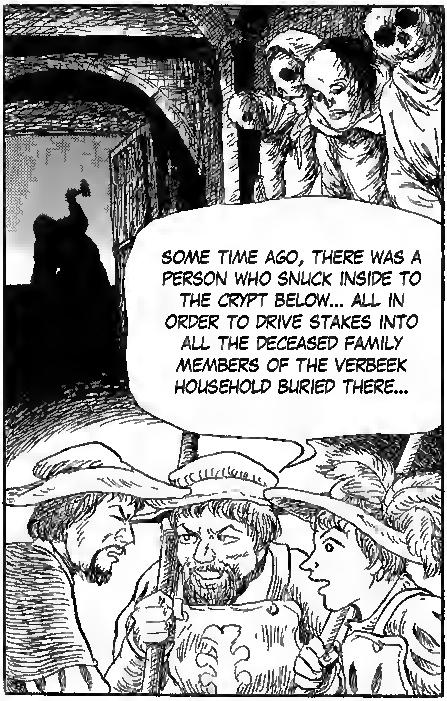

APPARENTLY, SHE WAS KILLED BY COUNT VERBEEK OR SOME OTHER PERSON ON CHARGES OF WITCHCRAFT.
SHE WAS FORCED INTO PUTTING ON RED-HOT IRON SHOES AND DANCE UNTIL SHE DIED.

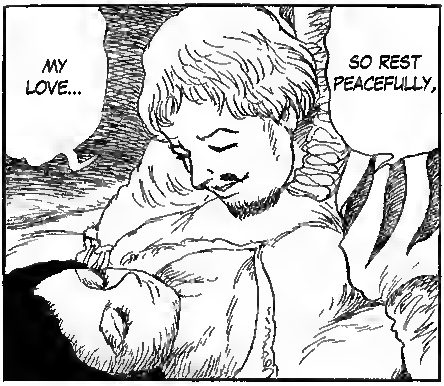

AND WHAT'S WITH THOSE IRON SHOES HANGING ON THE DOOR OF OUR LORD'S ROOM?
LOOKING AT A DEAD GIRL? TALK ABOUT EERIE...

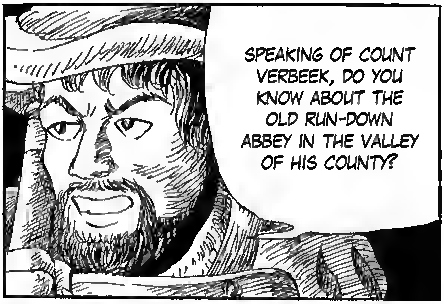

ABOUT THAT... I'VE HEARD SOMETHING QUITE CURIOUS. HAVE YOU HEARD OF COUNT VERBEEK'S SECOND WIFE?

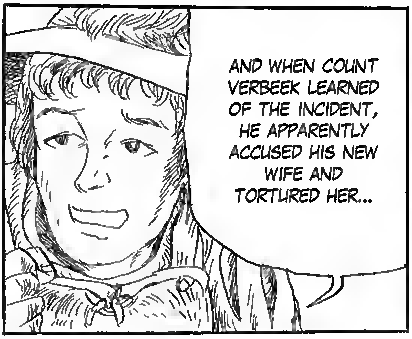
I WON'T LET THAT WITCH LAY EVEN ONE FINGER ON YOU... I WILL PROTECT YOU FOR ETERNITY...

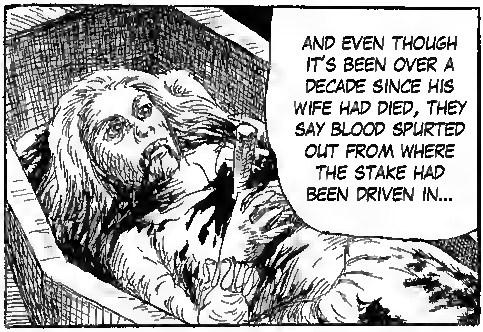
YOU'RE SAYING THOSE IRON SHOES ARE THE SAME ONES HANGING ON OUR LORD'S BEDROOM DOOR?
WHO KNOWS FOR CERTAIN... BUT I'VE HEARD THAT OUR LORD SENT FOR SERVANTS TO FIND THSOE SHOES AND BRING THEM BACK.


SOME TIME AGO, THERE WAS A PERSON WHO SNUCK INSIDE TO THE CRYPT BELOW... ALL IN ORDER TO DRIVE STAKES INTO ALL THE DECEASED FAMILY MEMBERS OF THE VERBEEK HOUSEHOLD BURIED THERE...

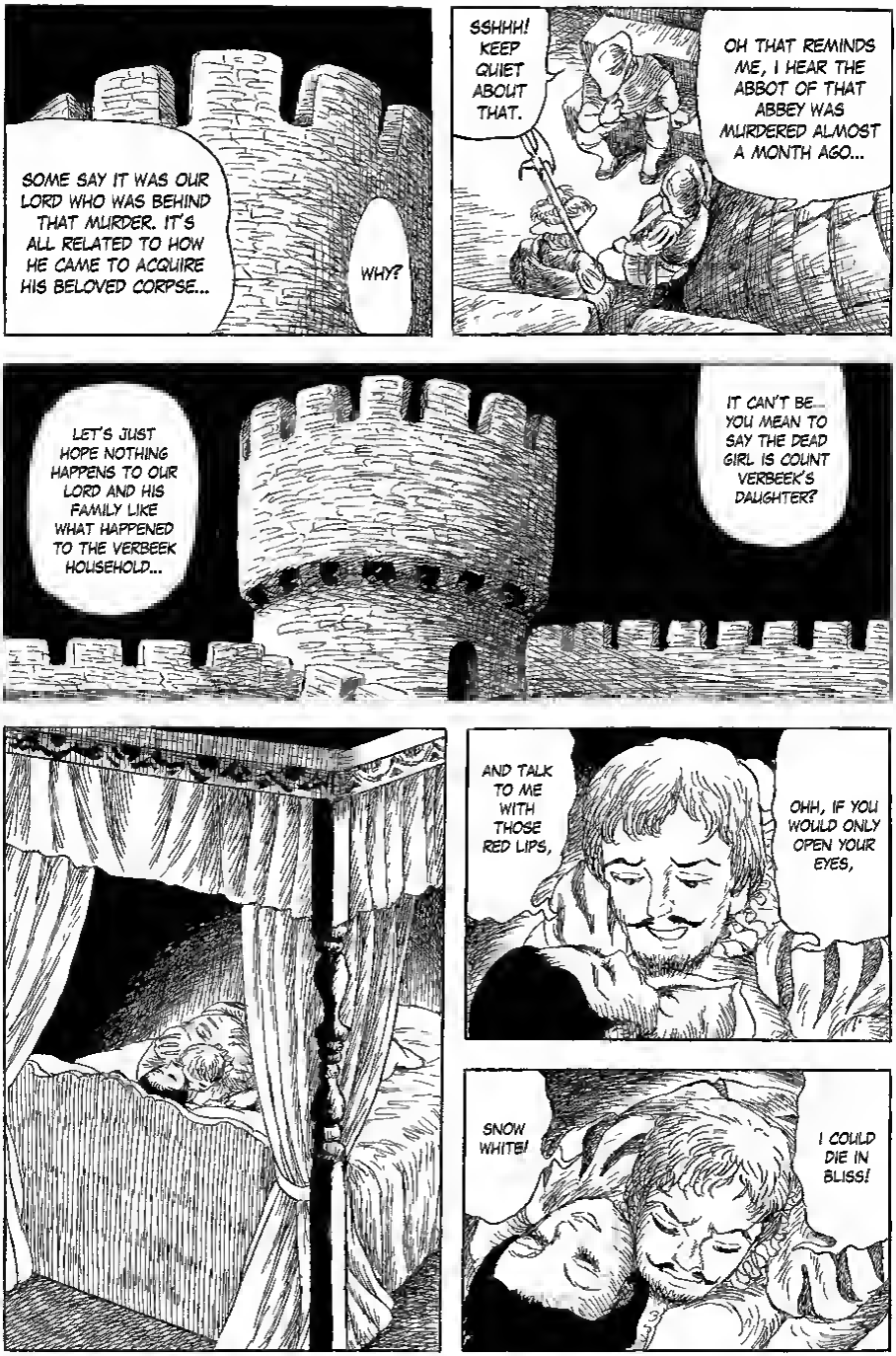

MY LOVE...
SO REST PEACEFULLY,

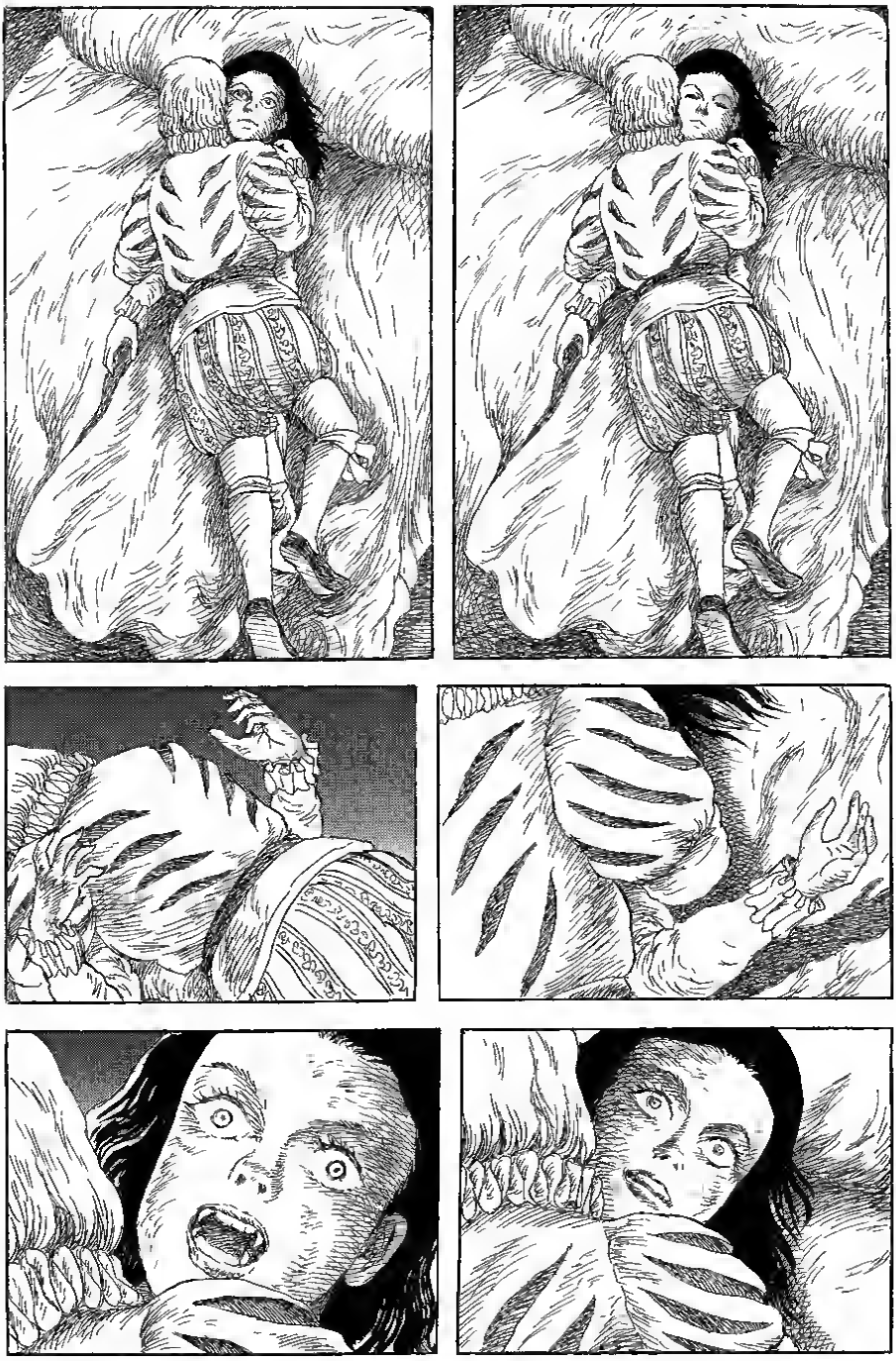

SPEAKING OF COUNT VERBEEK, DO YOU KNOW ABOUT THE OLD RUN-DOWN ABBEY IN THE VALLEY OF HIS COUNTY?

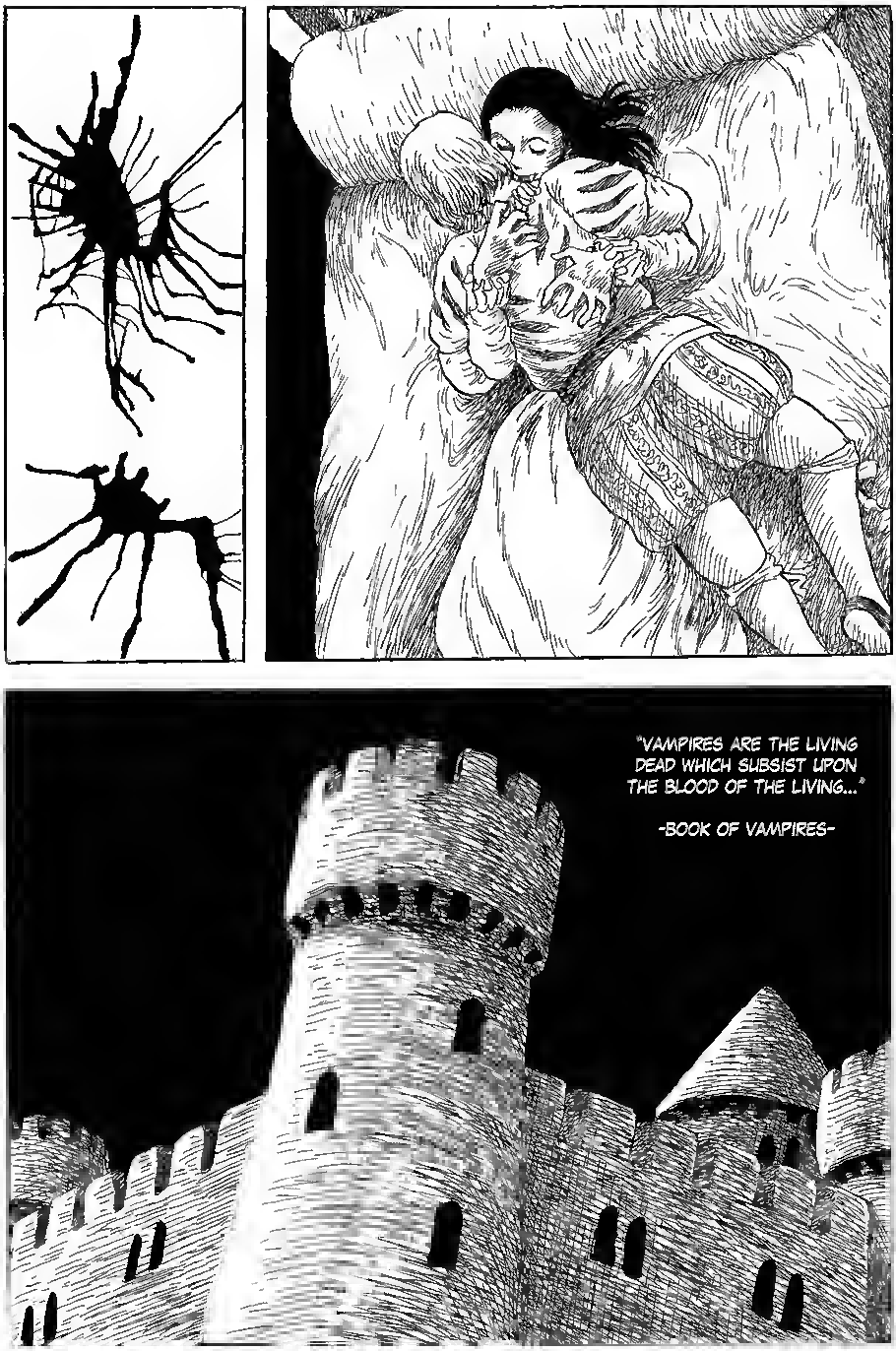

AND WHEN COUNT VERBEEK LEARNED OF THE INCIDENT, HE APPARENTLY ACCUSED HIS NEW WIFE AND TORTURED HER...


AND EVEN THOUGH IT'S BEEN OVER A DECADE SINCE HIS WIFE HAD DIED, THEY SAY BLOOD SPURTED OUT FROM WHERE THE STAKE HAD BEEN DRIVEN IN...

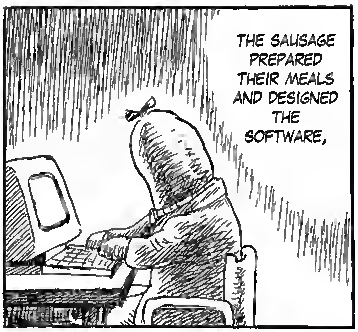
REALLY?
IN ANY CASE, BOTH THE COUNT AND HIS DAUGHTER DIED MYSTERIOUS DEATHS. THERE'S STILL PLENTY OF RUMOURS ABOUT THEM. LIKE THE ONE WHERE HIS DAUGHTER APPARENTLY HAD NO REFLECTION..

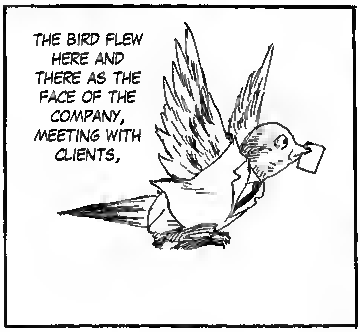

SOME SAY IT WAS OUR LORD WHO WAS BEHIND THAT MURDER. IT'S ALL RELATED TO HOW HE CAME TO ACQUIRE HIS BELOVED CORPSE...
WHY?
SSHHH! KEEP QUIET ABOUT THAT.
OH THAT REMINDS ME, I HEAR THE ABBOT OF THAT ABBEY WAS MURDERED ALMOST A MONTH AGO...
LET'S JUST HOPE NOTHING HAPPENS TO OUR LORD AND HIS FAMILY LIKE WHAT HAPPENED TO THE VERBEEK HOUSEHOLD...
IT CAN'T BE... YOU MEAN TO SAY THE DEAD GIRL IS COUNT VERBEEK'S DAUGHTER?
AND TALK TO ME WITH THOSE RED LIPS,
OHH, IF YOU WOULD ONLY OPEN YOUR EYES,
SNOW WHITE!
I COULD DIE IN BLISS!

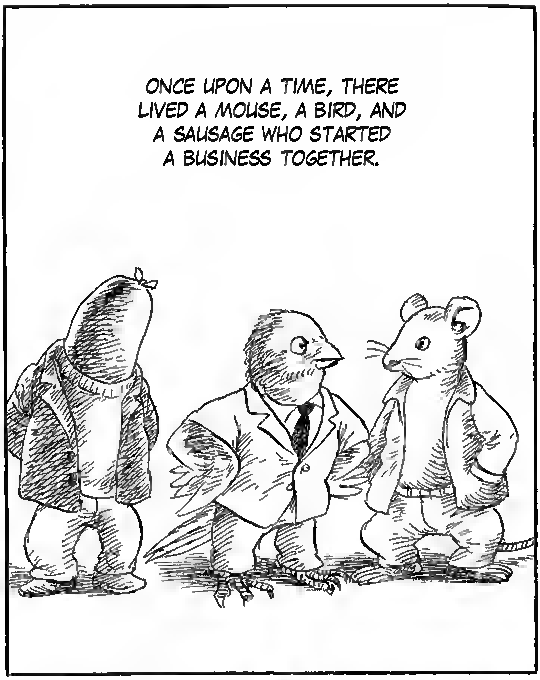



"VAMPIRES ARE THE LIVING DEAD WHICH SUBSIST UPON THE BLOOD OF THE LIVING..."
-BOOK OF VAMPIRES-

The Mouse, the Bird, and the Sausage

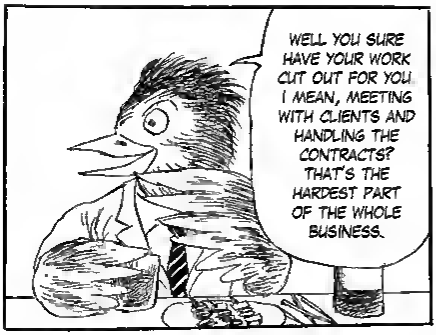

THE SAUSAGE PREPARED THEIR MEALS AND DESIGNED THE SOFTWARE,

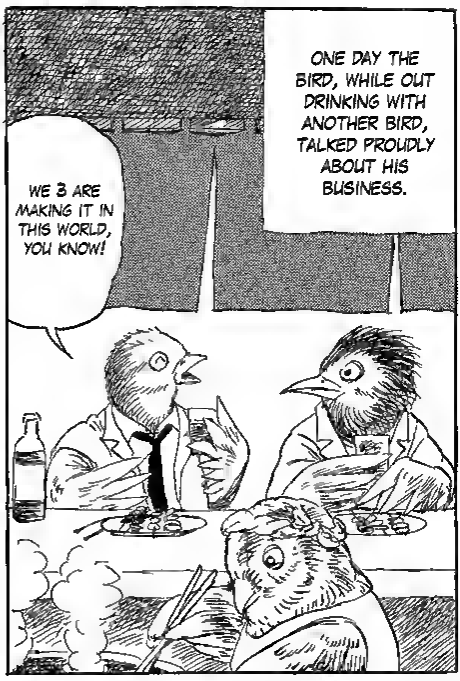

THE BIRD FLEW HERE AND THERE AS THE FACE OF THE COMPANY, MEETING WITH CLIENTS,

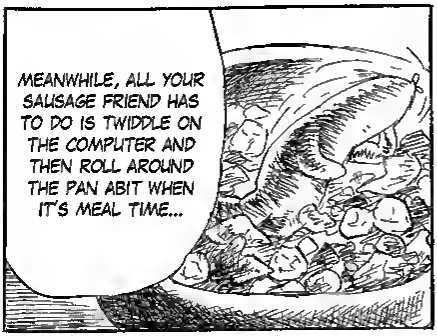

ONCE UPON A TIME, THERE LIVED A MOUSE, A BIRD, AND A SAUSAGE WHO STARTED A BUSINESS TOGETHER.

THE THREE FRIENDS WERE CONFI-DENT IN THEIR SUCCESS
YOU BET!
WE 3 ARE SURE MAKING IT IN THIS WORLD, RIGHT?

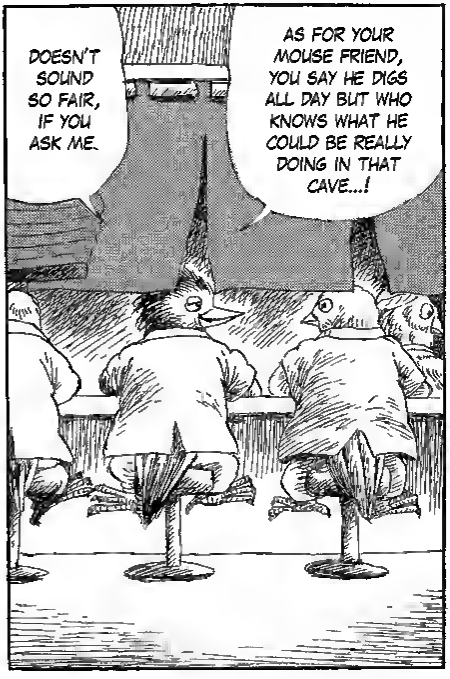
AND THE MOUSE DUG ALL DAY LONG.

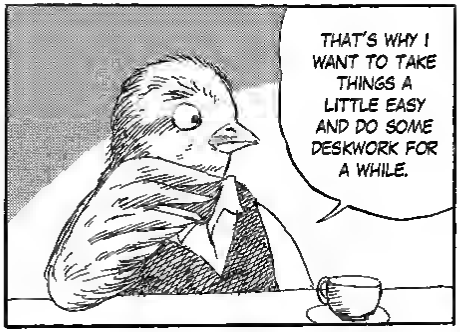

WELL YOU SURE HAVE YOUR WORK CUT OUT FOR YOU I MEAN, MEETING WITH CLIENTS AND HANDLING THE CONTRACTS? THAT'S THE HARDEST PART OF THE WHOLE BUSINESS.

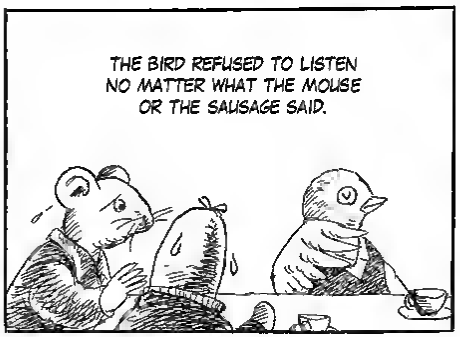

ONE DAY THE BIRD, WHILE OUT DRINKING WITH ANOTHER BIRD, TALKED PROUDLY ABOUT HIS BUSINESS.
WE 3 ARE MAKING IT IN THIS WORLD, YOU KNOW!

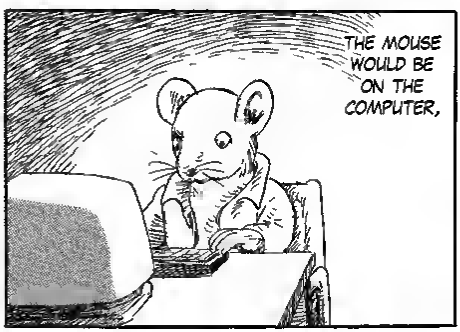

MEANWHILE, ALL YOUR SAUSAGE FRIEND HAS TO DO IS TWIDDLE ON THE COMPUTER AND THEN ROLL AROUND THE PAN ABIT WHEN IT'S MEAL TIME...

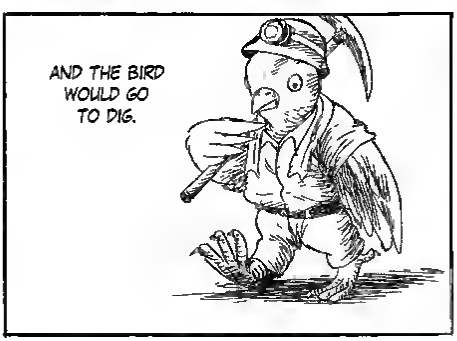
HEARING IT PUT THAT WAY, THE BIRD CAME TO WONDER IF HE REALLY WAS UNFAIRLY WORKING MUCH HARDER THAN HIS FRIENDS.


DOESN'T SOUND SO FAIR, IF YOU ASK ME.
AS FOR YOUR MOUSE FRIEND, YOU SAY HE DIGS ALL DAY BUT WHO KNOWS WHAT HE COULD BE REALLY DOING IN THAT CAVE...!

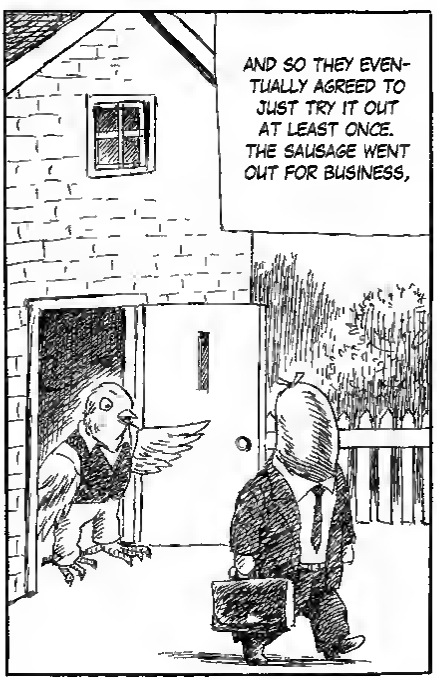

THAT'S WHY I WANT TO TAKE THINGS A LITTLE EASY AND DO SOME DESKWORK FOR A WHILE.


THE BIRD REFUSED TO LISTEN NO MATTER WHAT THE MOUSE OR THE SAUSAGE SAID.

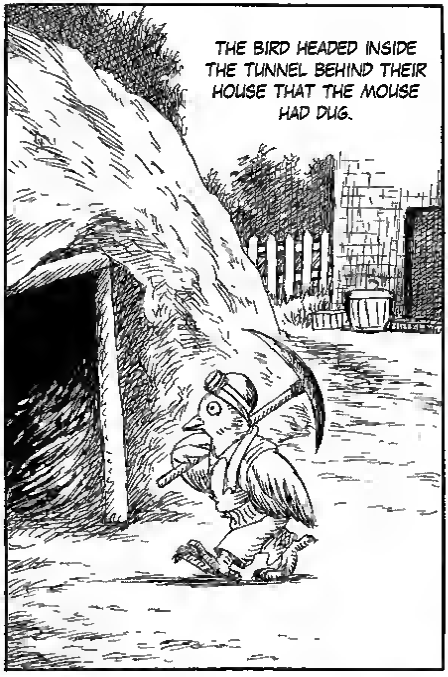

THE MOUSE WOULD BE ON THE COMPUTER,

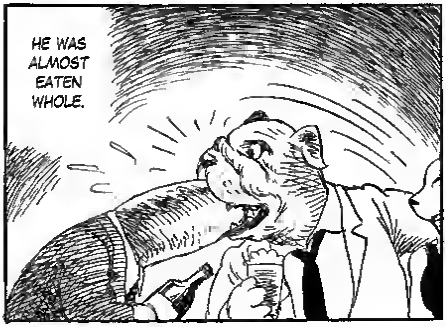

AND THE BIRD WOULD GO TO DIG.

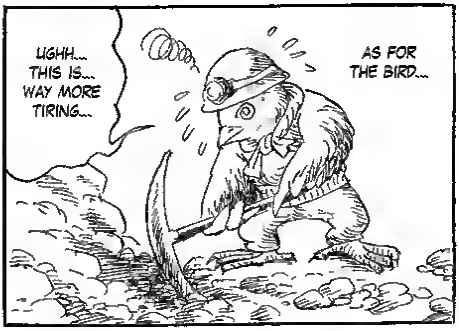
YOU KNOW, I FEEL LIKE OUR BUSINESS ONLY GOT TO WHERE IT IS NOW THANKS TO MY LEGWORK.
THE NEXT DAY, THE BIRD SUGGESTED THEY SWITCH ROLES.

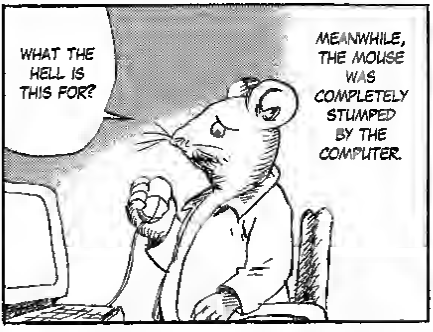

AND SO THEY EVENTUALLY AGREED TO JUST TRY IT OUT AT LEAST ONCE. THE SAUSAGE WENT OUT FOR BUSINESS,

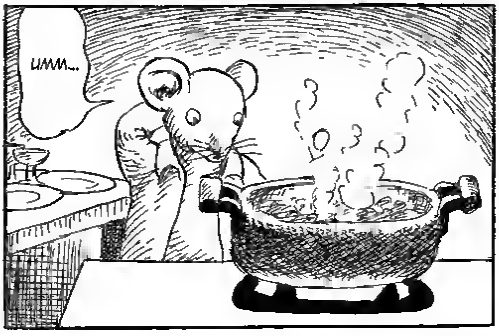
WHILE THE SAUSAGE WAS ENTERTAINING A CLIENT,

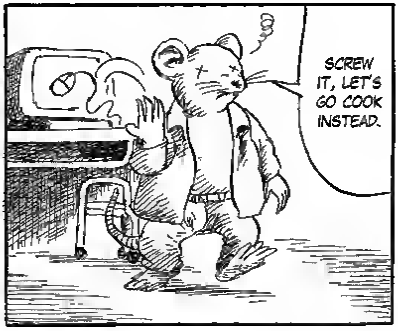

THE BIRD HEADED INSIDE THE TUNNEL BEHIND THEIR HOUSE THAT THE MOUSE HAD DUG.

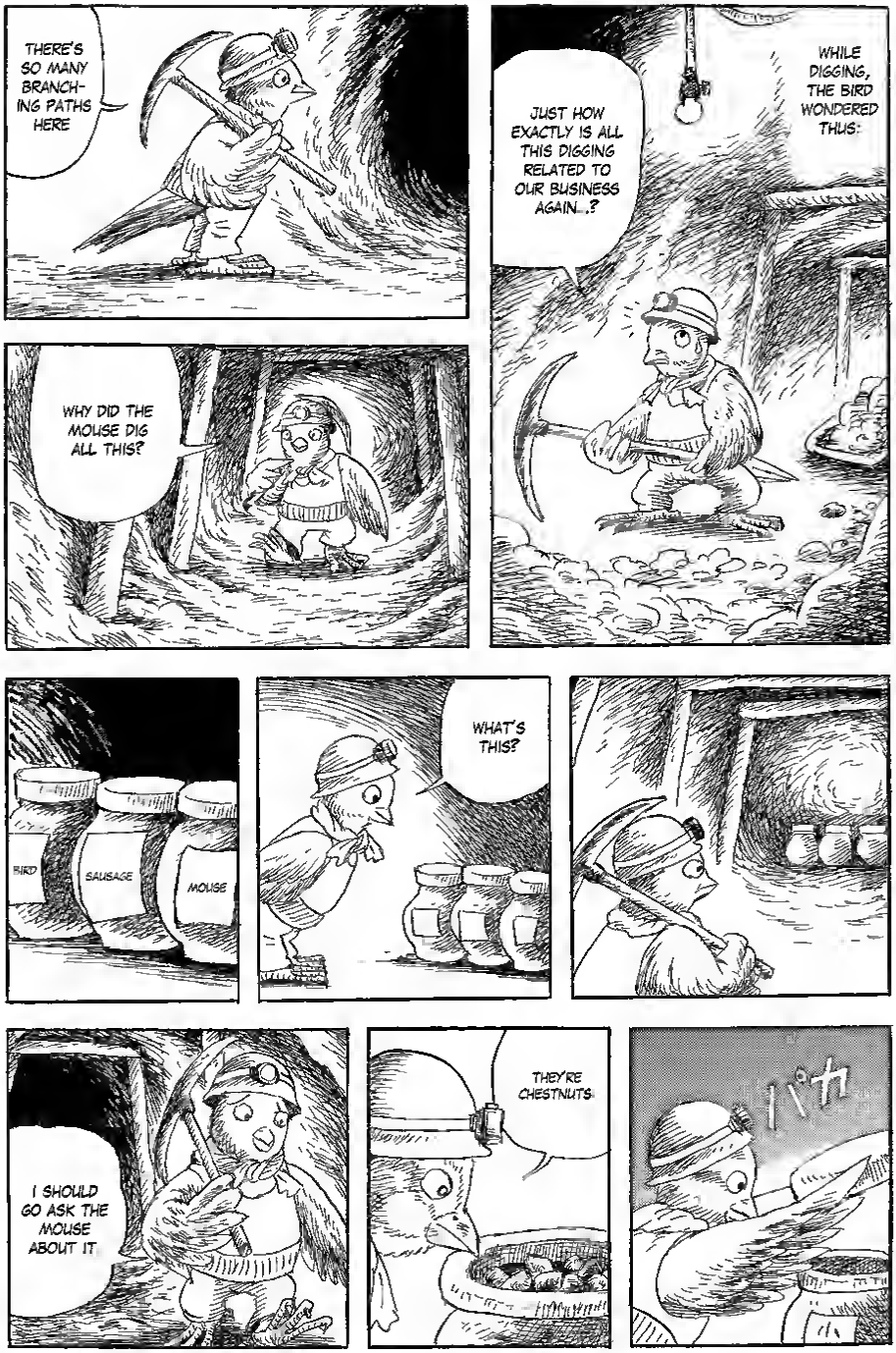

HE WAS ALMOST EATEN WHOLE.

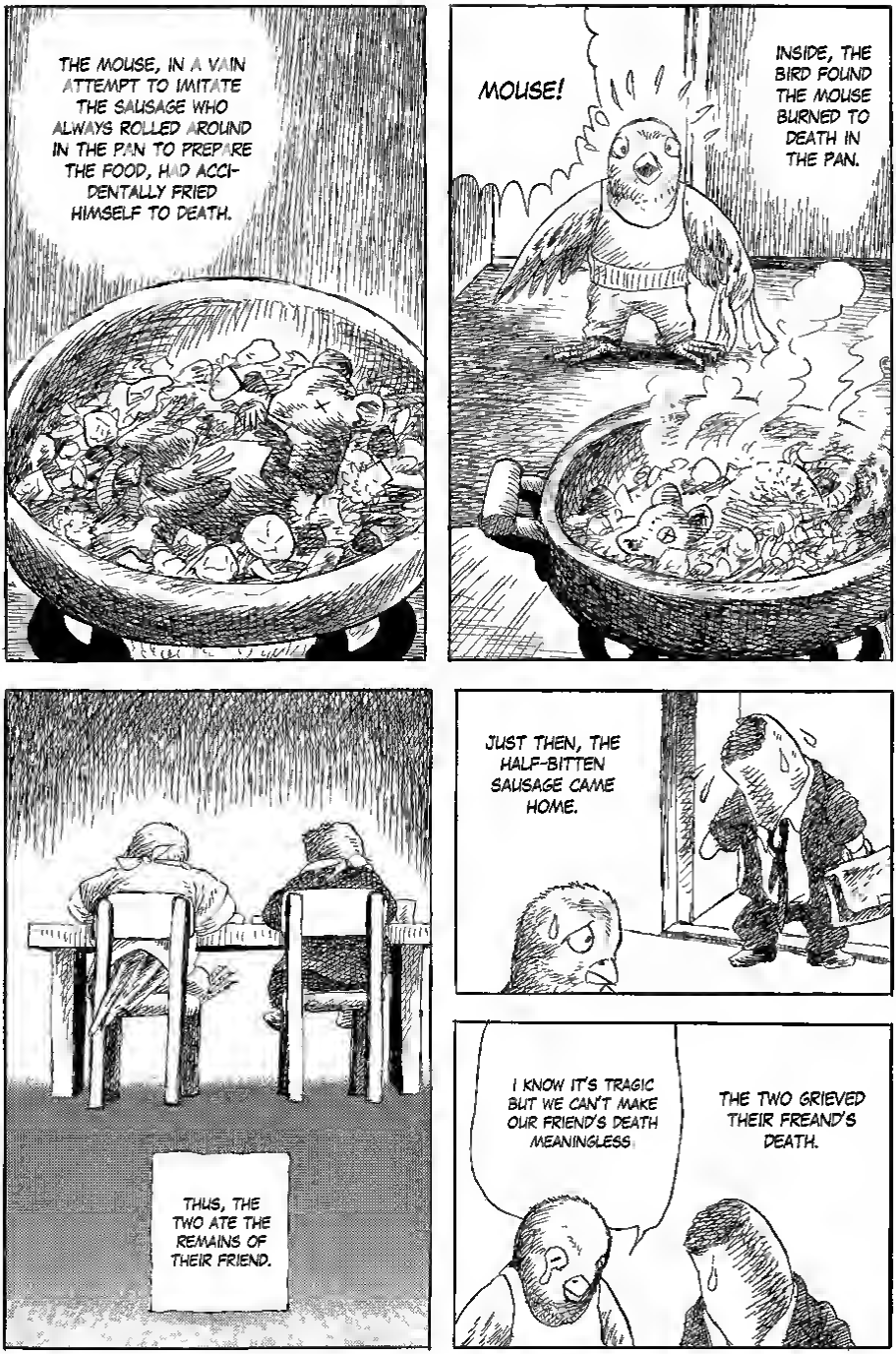

UGHH... THIS IS... WAY MORE TIRING...
AS FOR THE BIRD...

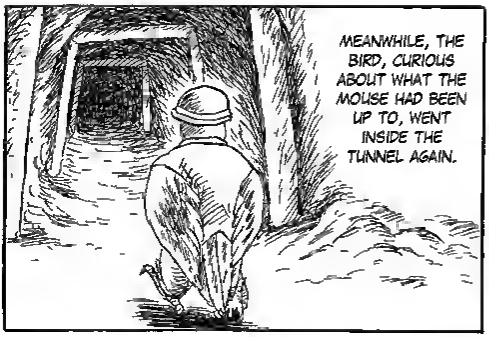

WHAT THE HELL IS THIS FOR?
MEANWHILE, THE MOUSE WAS COMPLETELY STUMPED BY THE COMPUTER.

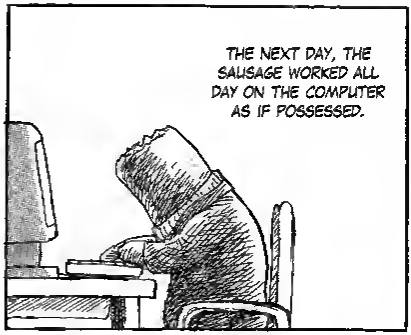

UMM...


SCREW IT, LET'S GO COOK INSTEAD.

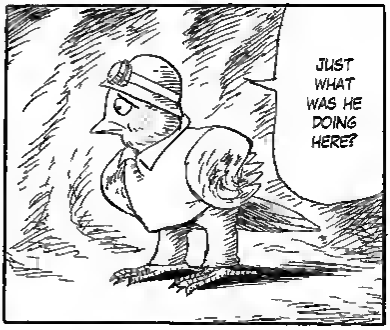

THERE'S SO MANY BRANCHING PATHS HERE
WHILE DIGGING, THE BIRD WONDERED THUS:
JUST HOW EXACTLY IS ALL THIS DIGGING RELATED TO OUR BUSINESS AGAIN...?
WHY DID THE MOUSE DIG ALL THIS?
BIRD
SAUSAGE
MOUSE
WHAT'S THIS?
I SHOULD GO ASK THE MOUSE ABOUT IT
THEY'RE CHESTNUTS
パカ


THE MOUSE, IN A VAIN ATTEMPT TO IMITATE THE SAUSAGE WHO ALWAYS ROLLED AROUND IN THE PAN TO PREPARE THE FOOD, HAD ACCIDENTALLY FRIED HIMSELF TO DEATH.
MOUSE!
INSIDE, THE BIRD FOUND THE MOUSE BURNED TO DEATH IN THE PAN.
THUS, THE TWO ATE THE REMAINS OF THEIR FRIEND.
JUST THEN, THE HALF-BITTEN SAUSAGE CAME HOME.
I KNOW IT'S TRAGIC BUT WE CAN'T MAKE OUR FRIEND'S DEATH MEANINGLESS.
THE TWO GRIEVED THEIR FREAND'S DEATH.

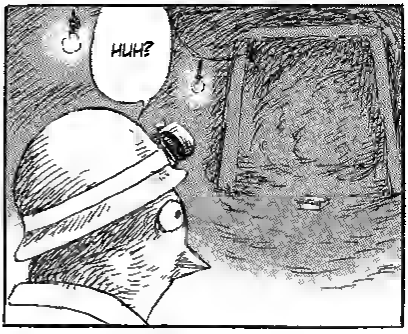

MEANWHILE, THE BIRD, CURIOUS ABOUT WHAT THE MOUSE HAD BEEN UP TO, WENT INSIDE THE TUNNEL AGAIN.

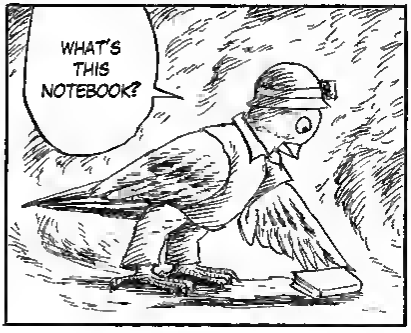

THE NEXT DAY, THE SAUSAGE WORKED ALL DAY ON THE COMPUTER AS IF POSSESSED.

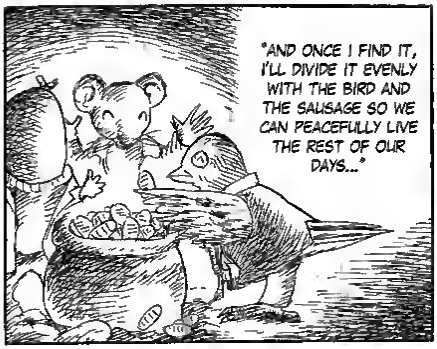
WHAT'S THIS ROOM FOR?

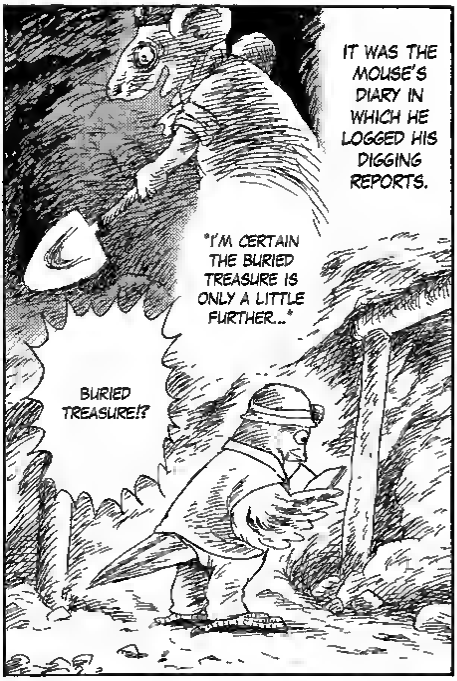

JUST WHAT WAS HE DOING HERE?

"WORK WENT SMOOTHLY. PROGRESSED 5M TODAY."
"...CAME ACROSS A LARGE ROCK. IT'S GOING TO TAKE SOME TIME IN CLEARING AWAY THIS PATH..."


HUH?

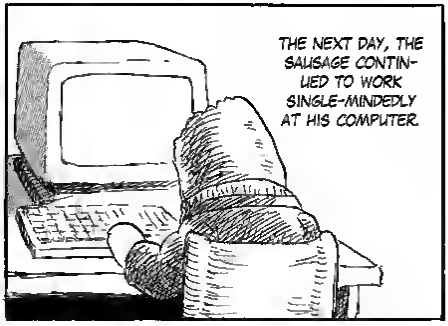

WHAT'S THIS NOTEBOOK?

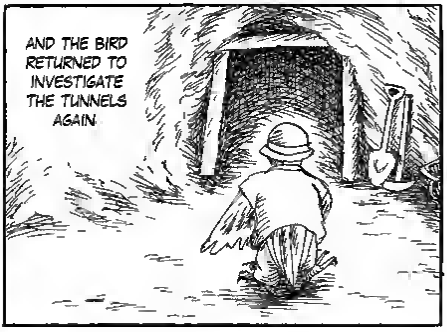

"AND ONCE I FIND IT, I'LL DIVIDE IT EVENLY WITH THE BIRD AND THE SAUSAGE SO WE CAN PEACEFULLY LIVE THE REST OF OUR DAYS..."

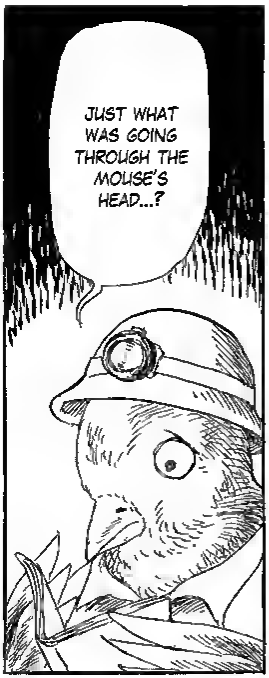

IT WAS THE MOUSE'S DIARY IN WHICH HE LOGGED HIS DIGGING REPORTS.
"I'M CERTAIN THE BURIED TREASURE IS ONLY A LITTLE FURTHER..."
BURIED TREASURE!?

JUST WHAT WAS GOING ON INSIDE THE MOUSE'S HEAD?

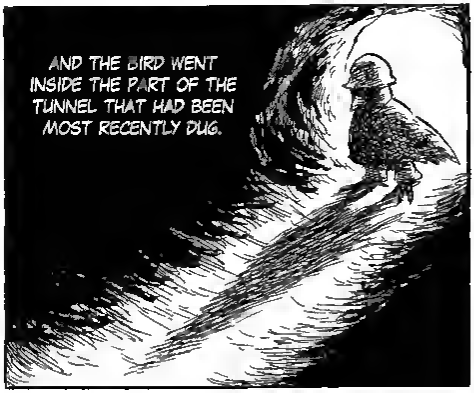
THE BIRD STEADILY INVESTIAGED THE DIFFERENT PATHS.

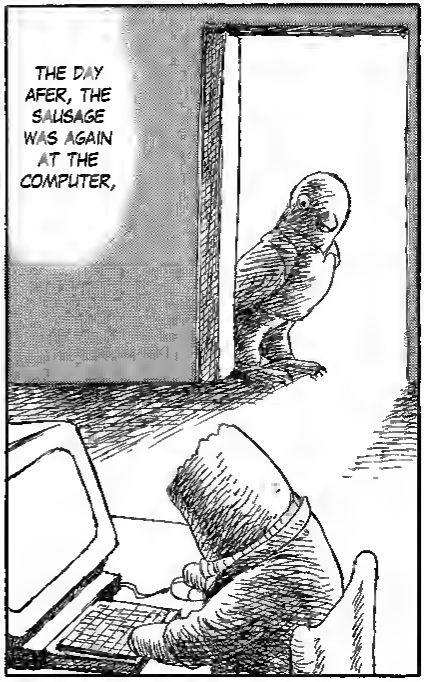

THE NEXT DAY, THE SAUSAGE CONTINUED TO WORK SINGLE-MINDEDLY AT HIS COMPUTER.

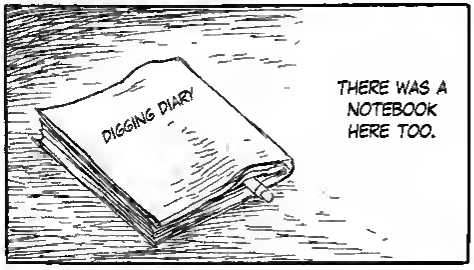

AND THE BIRD RETURNED TO INVESTIGATE THE TUNNELS AGAIN

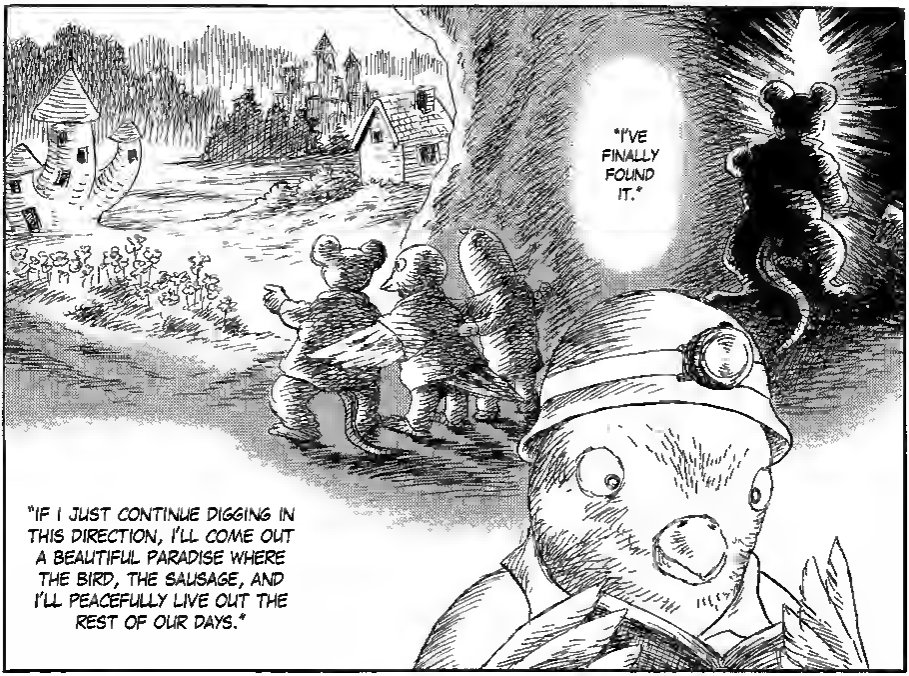

JUST WHAT WAS GOING THROUGH THE MOUSE'S HEAD...?

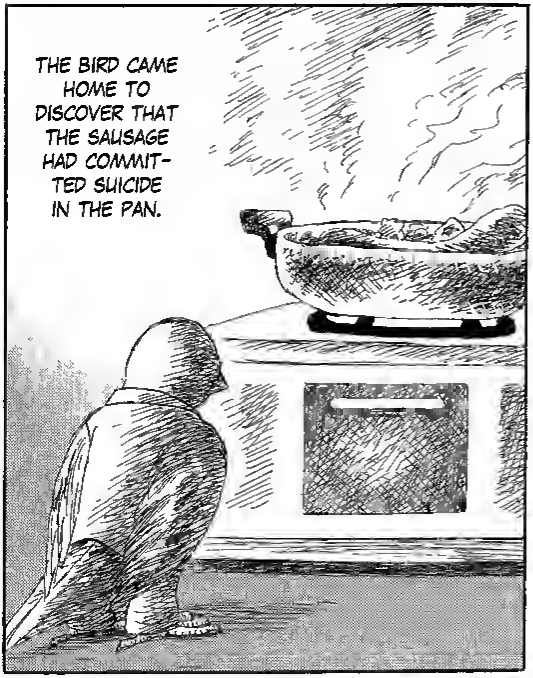
WHILE OTHERS TALKED ABOUT FINDING GOLD.


AND THE BIRD WENT INSIDE THE PART OF THE TUNNEL THAT HAD BEEN MOST RECENTLY DUG.

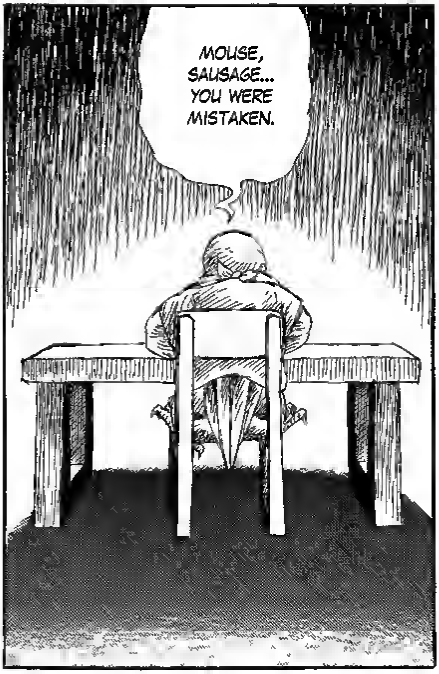

THE DAY AFER, THE SAUSAGE WAS AGAIN AT THE COMPUTER,

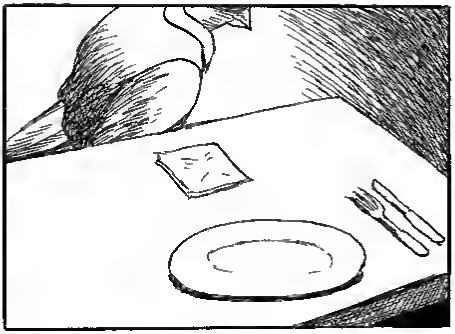

DIGGING DIARY
THERE WAS A NOTEBOOK HERE TOO.


"I'VE FINALLY FOUND IT."
"IF I JUST CONTINUE DIGGING IN THIS DIRECTION, I'LL COME OUT A BEAUTIFUL PARADISE WHERE THE BIRD, THE SAUSAGE, AND I'LL PEACEFULLY LIVE OUT THE REST OF OUR DAYS."


THE BIRD CAME HOME TO DISCOVER THAT THE SAUSAGE HAD COMMIT-TED SUICIDE IN THE PAN.

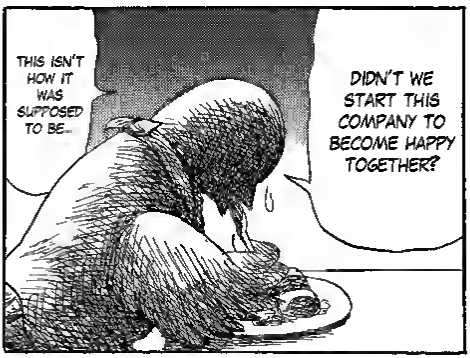
"ALRIGHT, I CAN'T SLACK OFF NOW. I GOTTA KEEP WORKING HARD FOR EVERYONE'S SAKE..."

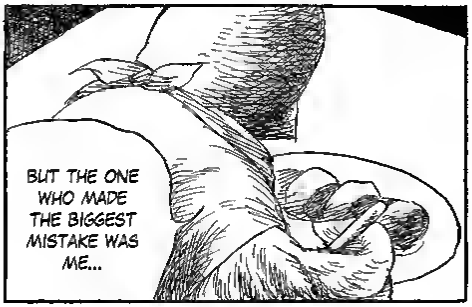

MOUSE, SAUSAGE... YOU WERE MISTAKEN.



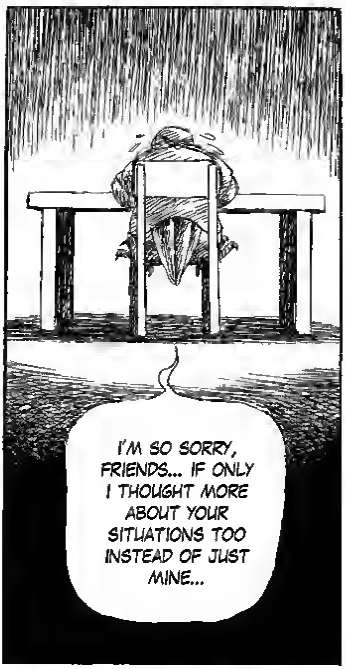
"SORRY, BIRD. I'M JUST TOO TIRED TO GO ON ANY FURTHER. FEEL FREE TO WARM UP AND EAT MY REMAINS."

IF ONLY WE HAD JUST STUCK TO OUR ORIGINAL JOBS, WE REALLY COULD HAVE BEEN HAPPY FOREVER...


THIS ISN'T HOW IT WAS SUPPOSED TO BE...
DIDN'T WE START THIS COMPANY TO BECOME HAPPY TOGETHER?

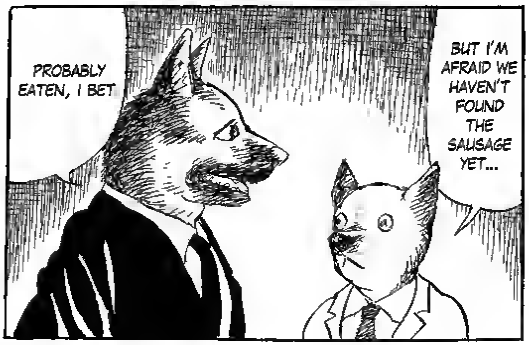

BUT THE ONE WHO MADE THE BIGGEST MISTAKE WAS ME...

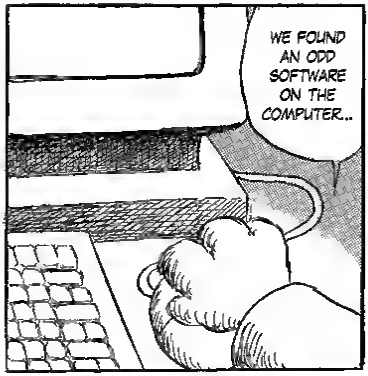
THIS WAS THE BIRD'S NOTE WE FOUND BY THE WELL WHERE HE DROWNED.
IT'S A CLEAR-CUT SUICIDE, ALRIGHT

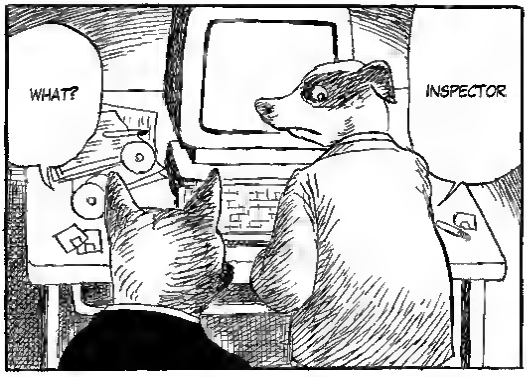

I'M SO SORRY, FRIENDS... IF ONLY I THOUGHT MORE ABOUT YOUR SITUATIONS TOO INSTEAD OF JUST MINE...

THE MOUSE'S BONES WERE FOUND BURIED INSIDE THE TUNNEL,
WHAT ABOUT THE SAUSAGE AND THE MOUSE?

FIND ANY OTHER EVIDENCE?

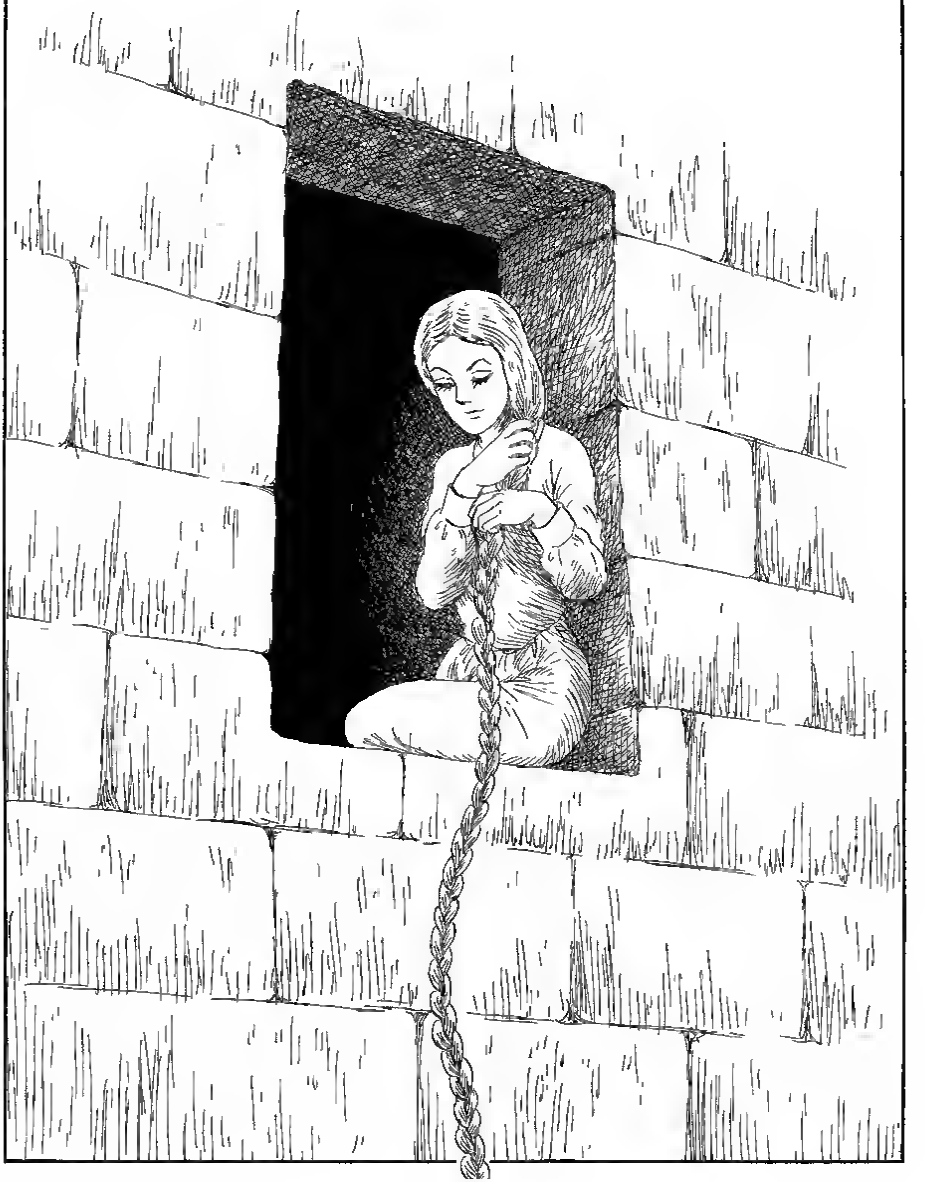

PROBABLY EATEN, I BET
BUT I'M AFRAID WE HAVEN'T FOUND THE SAUSAGE YET...



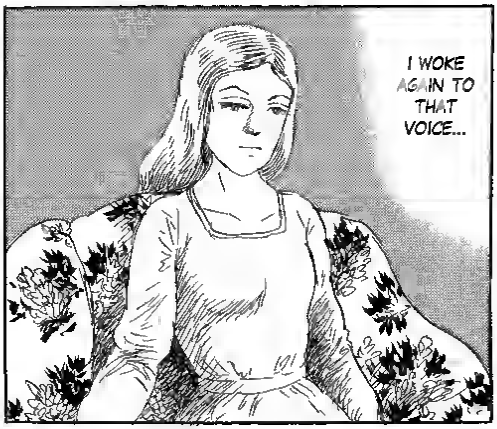


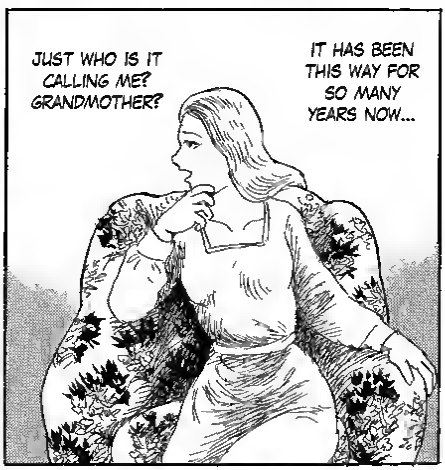
IT WAS A COMPUTER GAME IN WHICH THE MOUSE, THE BIRD, AND THE SAUSAGE LIVED HAPPILY TOGETHER. THE THREE OF THEM STILL LIVE IN PEACE INSIDE THAT GAME EVEN TODAY.

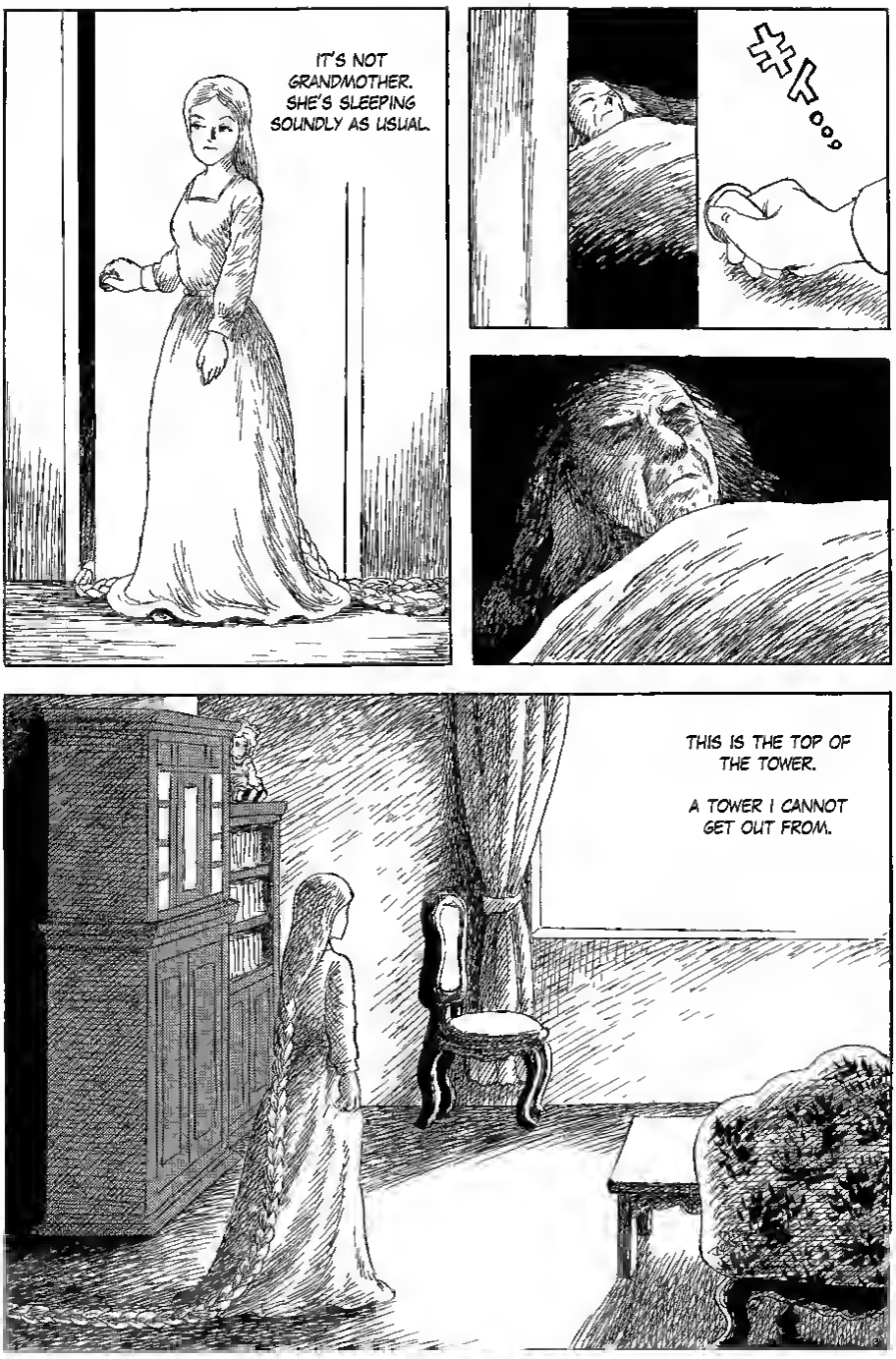
Rapunzel

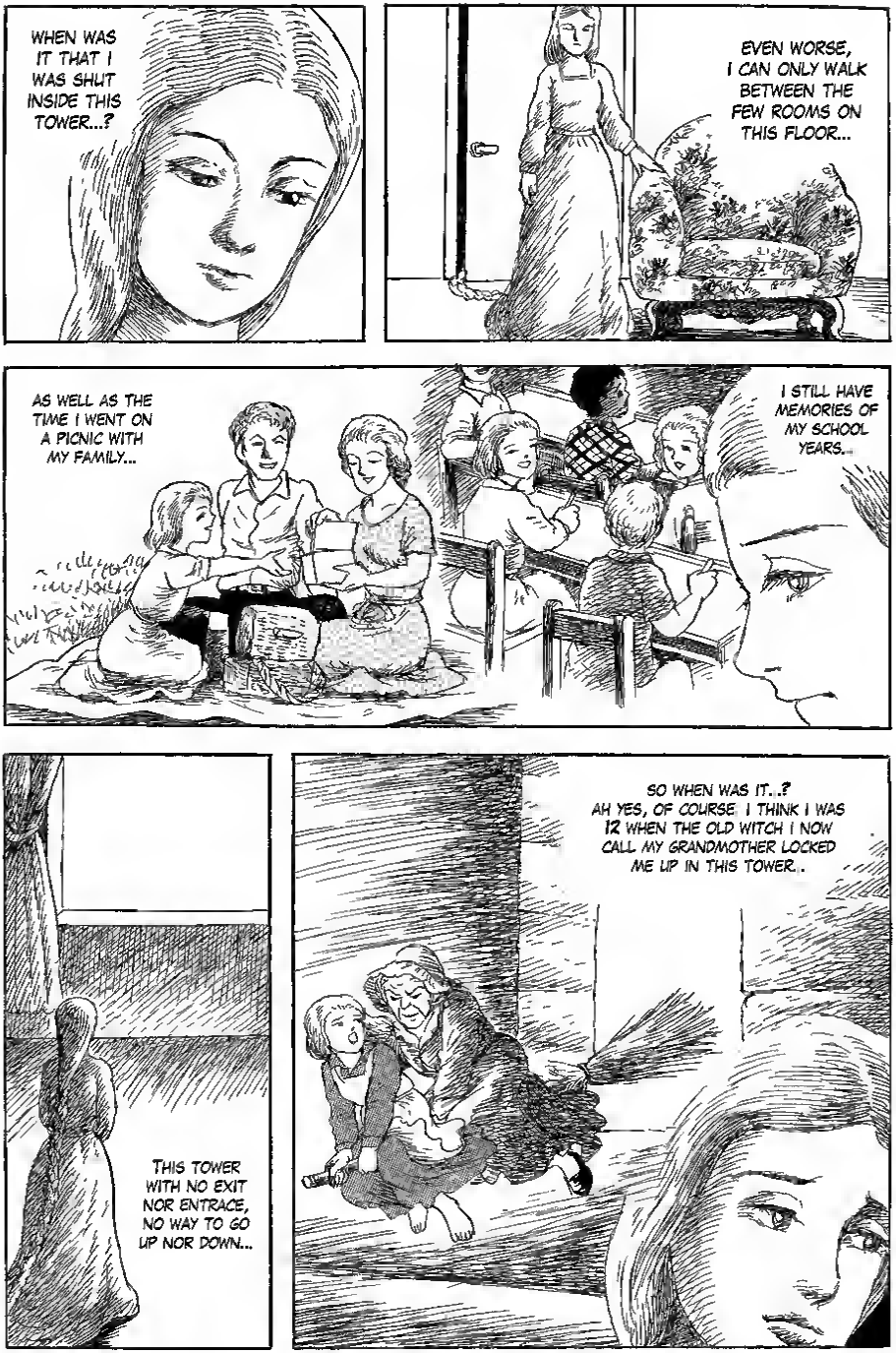


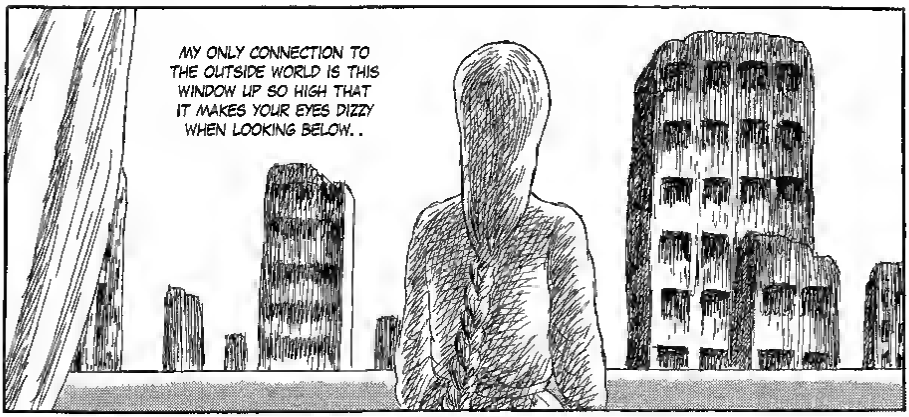
RAPUNZEL, RAPUNZEL,
LET DOWN YOUR HAIR.

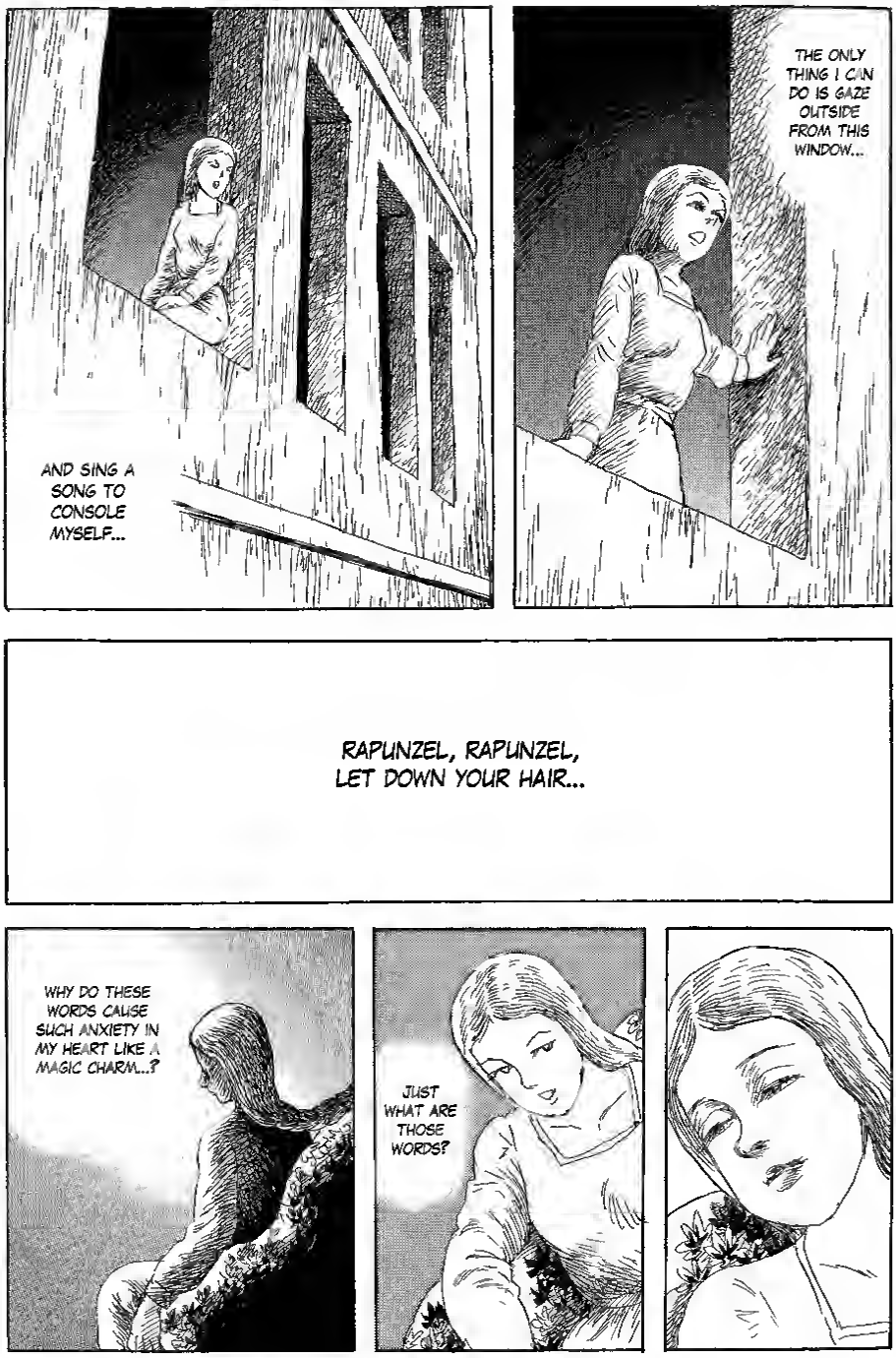


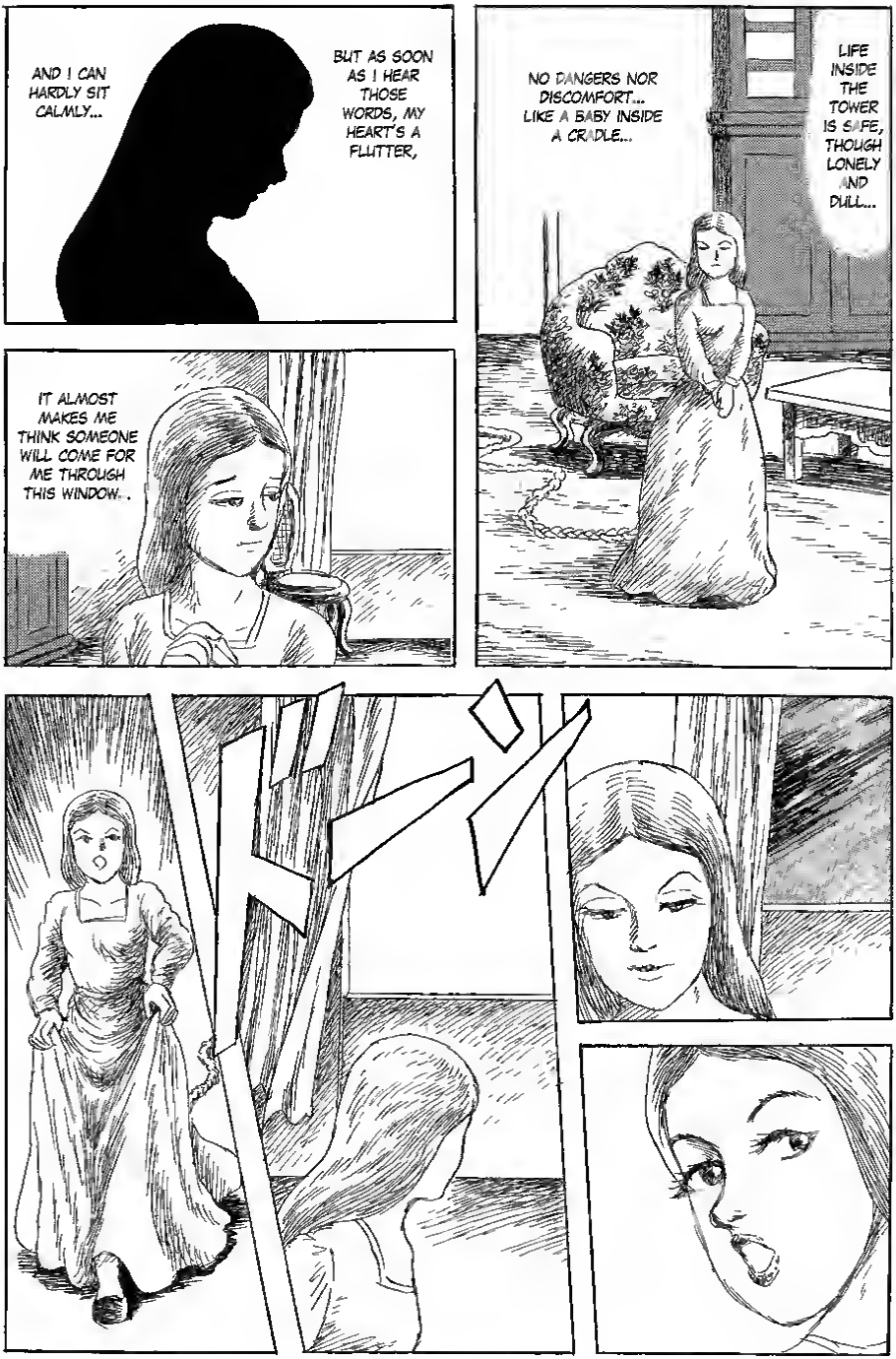


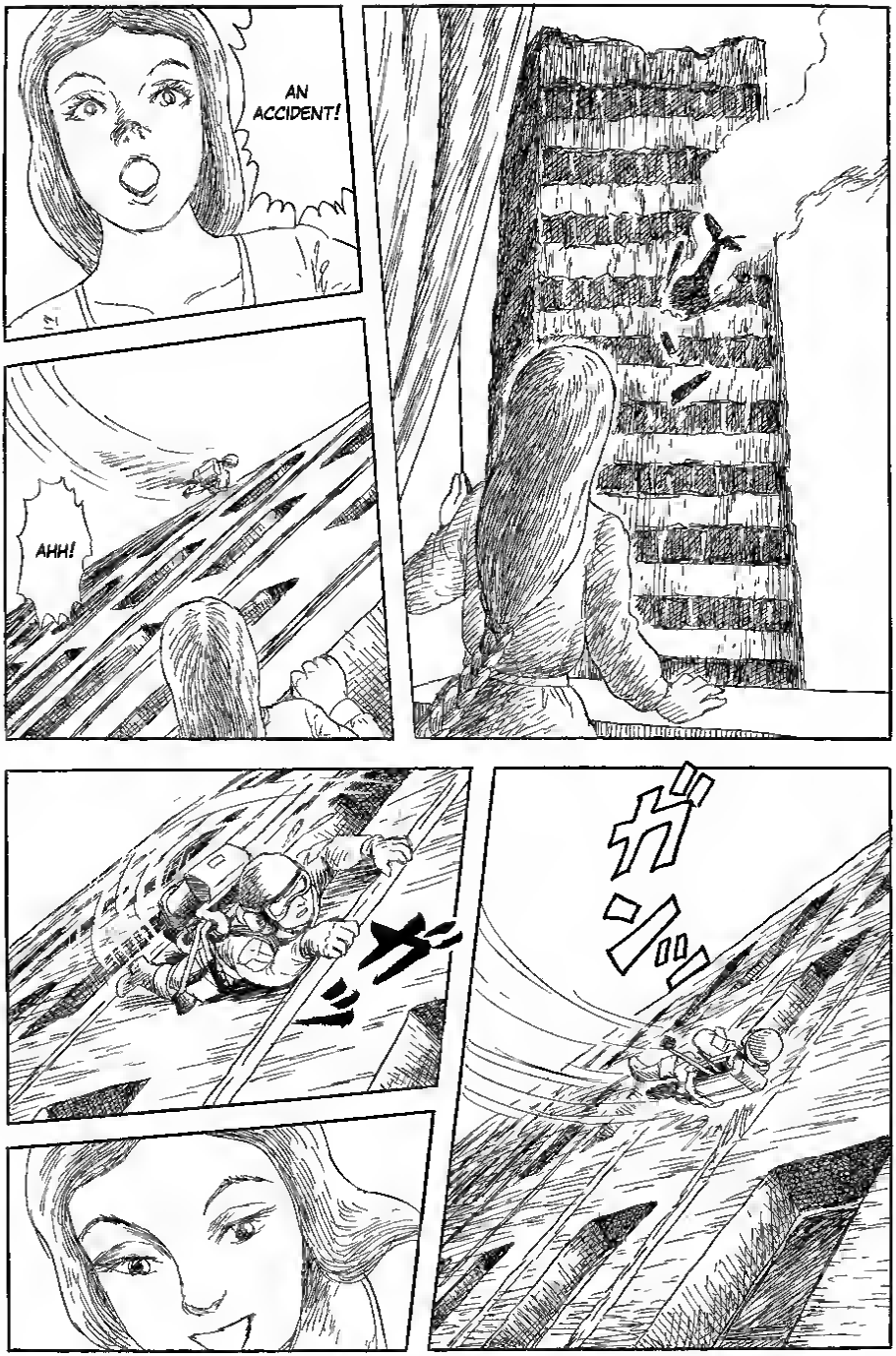

IT'S NOT GRANDMOTHER. SHE'S SLEEPING SOUNDLY AS USUAL.
スヤスヤ
THIS IS THE TOP OF THE TOWER.
A TOWER I CANNOT GET OUT FROM.


WHEN WAS IT THAT I WAS SHUT INSIDE THIS TOWER...?
EVEN WORSE, I CAN ONLY WALK BETWEEN THE FEW ROOMS ON THIS FLOOR...
AS WELL AS THE TIME I WENT ON A PICNIC WITH MY FAMILY...
I STILL HAVE MEMORIES OF MY SCHOOL YEARS...
THIS TOWER WITH NO EXIT NOR ENTRACE, NO WAY TO GO UP NOR DOWN...
SO WHEN WAS IT..? AH YES, OF COURSE. I THINK I WAS 12 WHEN THE OLD WITCH I NOW CALL MY GRANDMOTHER LOCKED ME UP IN THIS TOWER..


MY ONLY CONNECTION TO THE OUTSIDE WORLD IS THIS WINDOW UP SO HIGH THAT IT MAKES YOUR EYES DIZZY WHEN LOOKING BELOW..

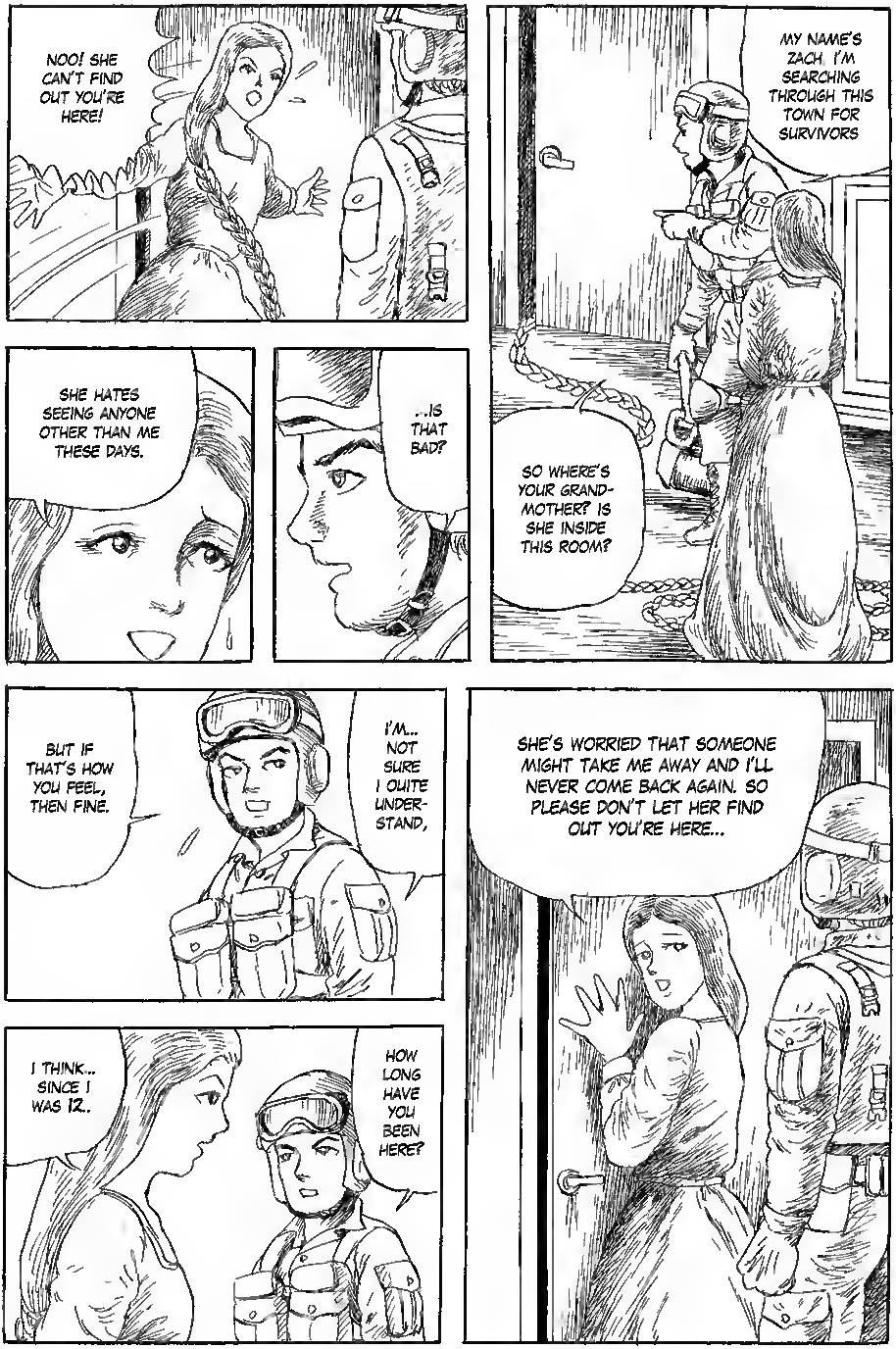

AND SING A SONG TO CONSOLE MYSELF...
THE ONLY THING I CAN DO IS GAZE OUTSIDE FROM THIS WINDOW...
RAPUNZEL, RAPUNZEL, LET DOWN YOUR HAIR...
WHY DO THESE WORDS CAUSE SUCH ANXIETY IN MY HEART LIKE A MAGIC CHARM...?
JUST WHAT ARE THOSE WORDS?


AND I CAN HARDLY SIT CALMLY...
BUT AS SOON AS I HEAR THOSE WORDS, MY HEART'S A FLUTTER,
NO DANGERS NOR DISCOMFORT... LIKE A BABY INSIDE A CRADLE...
LIFE INSIDE THE TOWER IS SAFE, THOUGH LONELY AND DULL...
IT ALMOST MAKES ME THINK SOMEONE WILL COME FOR ME THROUGH THIS WINDOW..
ドーン


AN ACCIDENT!
AHH!
ガシッ!!

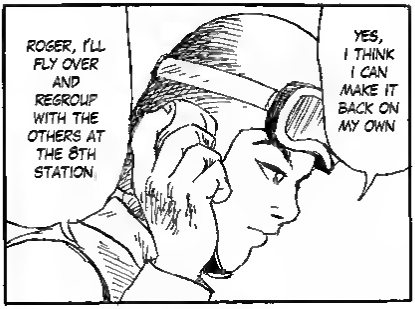
BUT THIS HAIR IS...
LET DOWN YOUR HAIR...
RAPUNZEL, RAPUNZEL,
I THINK I CAN JUST BARELY REACH HIM...
バラン
バラン

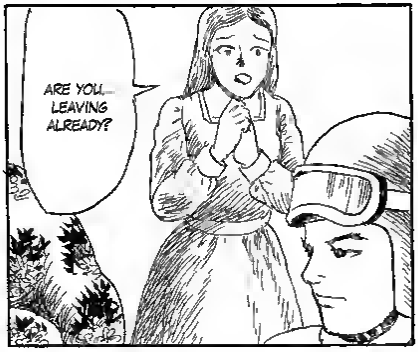
YES.. ARE YOU FROM THIS HOSPITAL WAR-
ARE YOU THE ONE WHO SAVED ME?
IT'S JUST ME AND THE W— MY GRAND-MOTHER WHO ARE YOU..?
HOW MANY PEOPLE ARE HERE INCLUDING YOU?


NOO! SHE CAN'T FIND OUT YOU'RE HERE!
MY NAME'S ZACH. I'M SEARCHING THROUGH THIS TOWN FOR SURVIVORS
SO WHERE'S YOUR GRAND-MOTHER? IS SHE INSIDE THIS ROOM?
SHE HATES SEEING ANYONE OTHER THAN ME THESE DAYS.
...IS THAT BAD?
SHE'S WORRIED THAT SOMEONE MIGHT TAKE ME AWAY AND I'LL NEVER COME BACK AGAIN. SO PLEASE DON'T LET HER FIND OUT YOU'RE HERE...
I'M... NOT SURE I QUITE UNDER-STAND,
BUT IF THAT'S HOW YOU FEEL, THEN FINE.
HOW LONG HAVE YOU BEEN HERE?
I THINK.. SINCE I WAS 12..

DON'T YOU WATCH THE NEWS?
DID... SOMETHING HAPPEN?
HAVE YOU BEEN RELYING ON FUEL CELLS ALL ALONG OR IS YOUR HOME'S POWER GENERATOR STILL WORKING..?
I SEE... I'M IMPRESSED YOU'VE DONE FINE UNTIL NOW.
I SHOULD FIRST CHECK IF I HAVE ENOUGH POWER TO RETURN ON MY OWN...
IN ANY CASE, LET'S SAVE THE LONG STORY FOR NOW. I'VE GOT TO REPORT BACK TO MY UNIT.
MOST OF THE SURVIVING CITIZENS ALL FLED FROM HERE..
I'M SURPRISED YOU AREN'T AWARE OF THE CATASTROPHE THAT HAPPENED...
I'VE BEEN TOLD THERE'S A SURVIVOR HERE.. NO, I HAVEN'T CONFIRMED THE OTHER PERSON YET...
THIS IS ZACH FROM SQUAD-C. MY CHOPPER'S GONE DOWN AND I'M NOW INSIDE A BUILDING.
OH GOOD, THE ALTITUDE-PROPELLING APPARATUS ONLY SUSTAINED DAMAGE TO ONE MINOR SECTION. I CAN FIX THIS WITH THE TOOLS I HAVE RIGHT NOW.
ZZZZ...

YES, FOR NOW. BUT DON'T WORRY, I'LL COME BACK TO PICK YOU UP SOON
REALLY? YOU'D DO THAT FOR ME...?


ROGER, I'LL FLY OVER AND REGROUP WITH THE OTHERS AT THE 8TH STATION
YES, I THINK I CAN MAKE IT BACK ON MY OWN


ARE YOU... LEAVING ALREADY?

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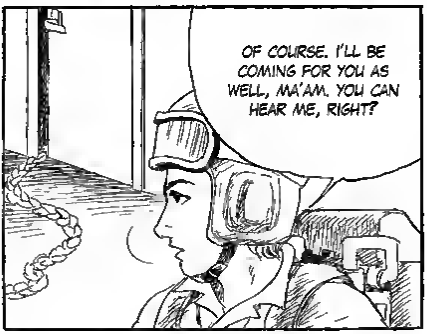
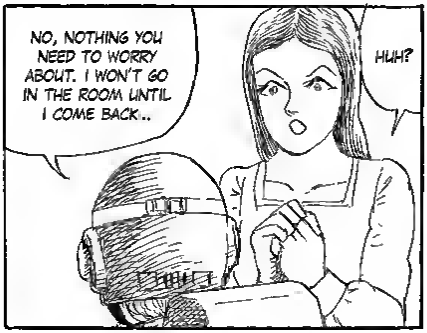
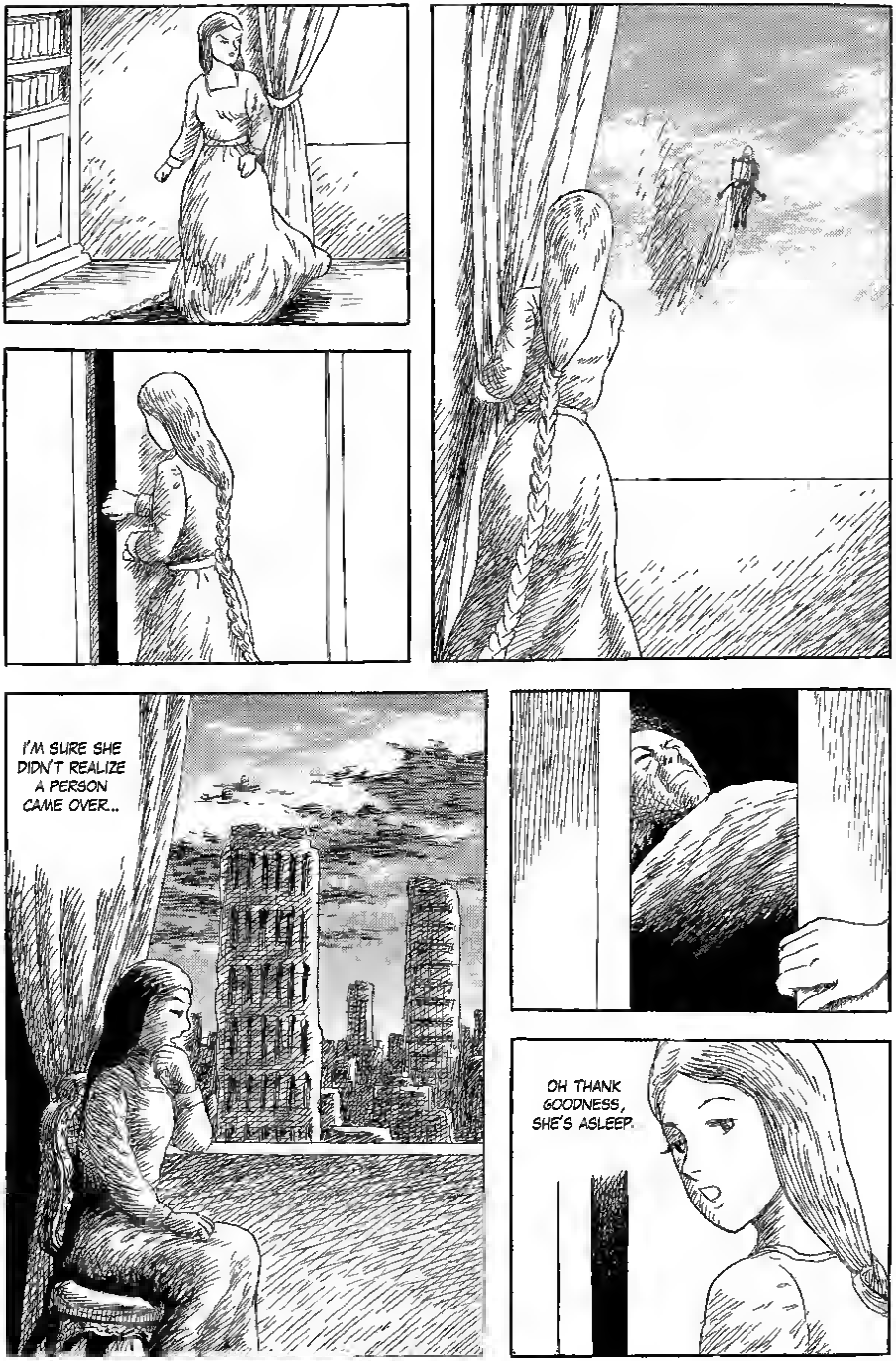
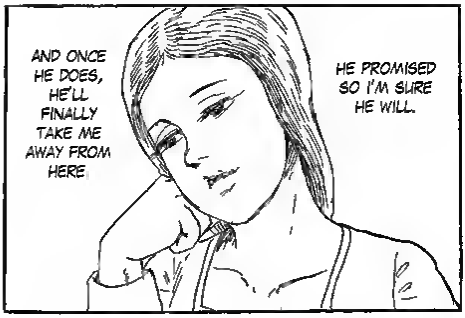
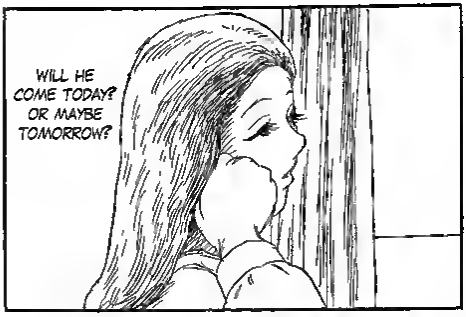

OF COURSE. I'LL BE COMING FOR YOU AS WELL, MA'AM. YOU CAN HEAR ME, RIGHT?

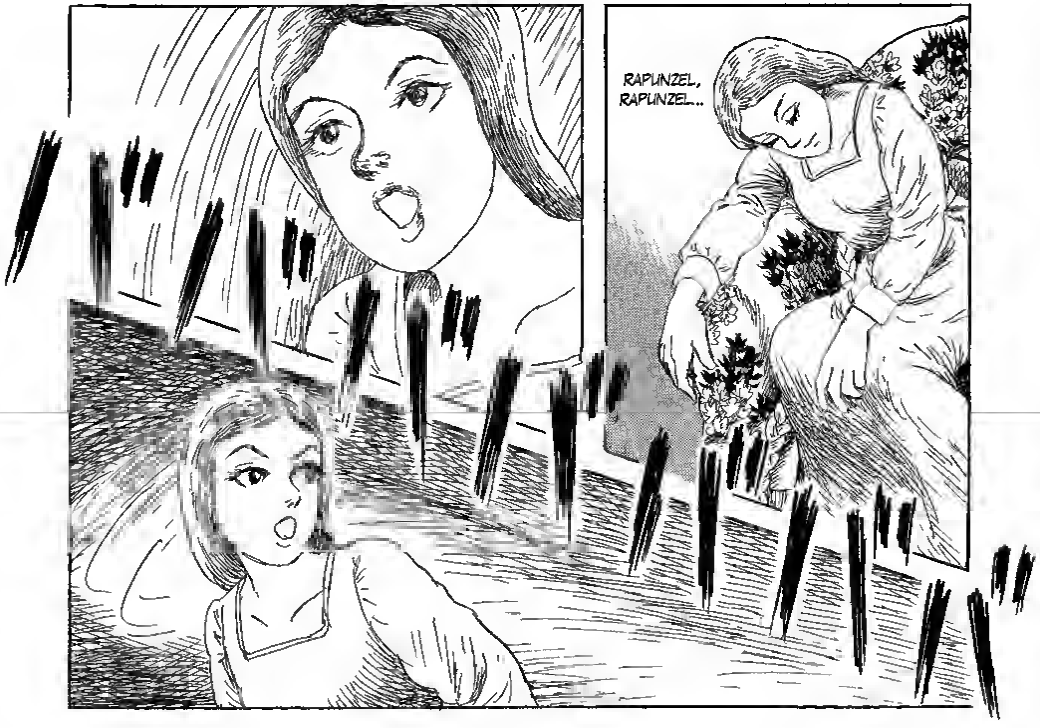

NO, NOTHING YOU NEED TO WORRY ABOUT. I WON'T GO IN THE ROOM UNTIL I COME BACK..
HUH?

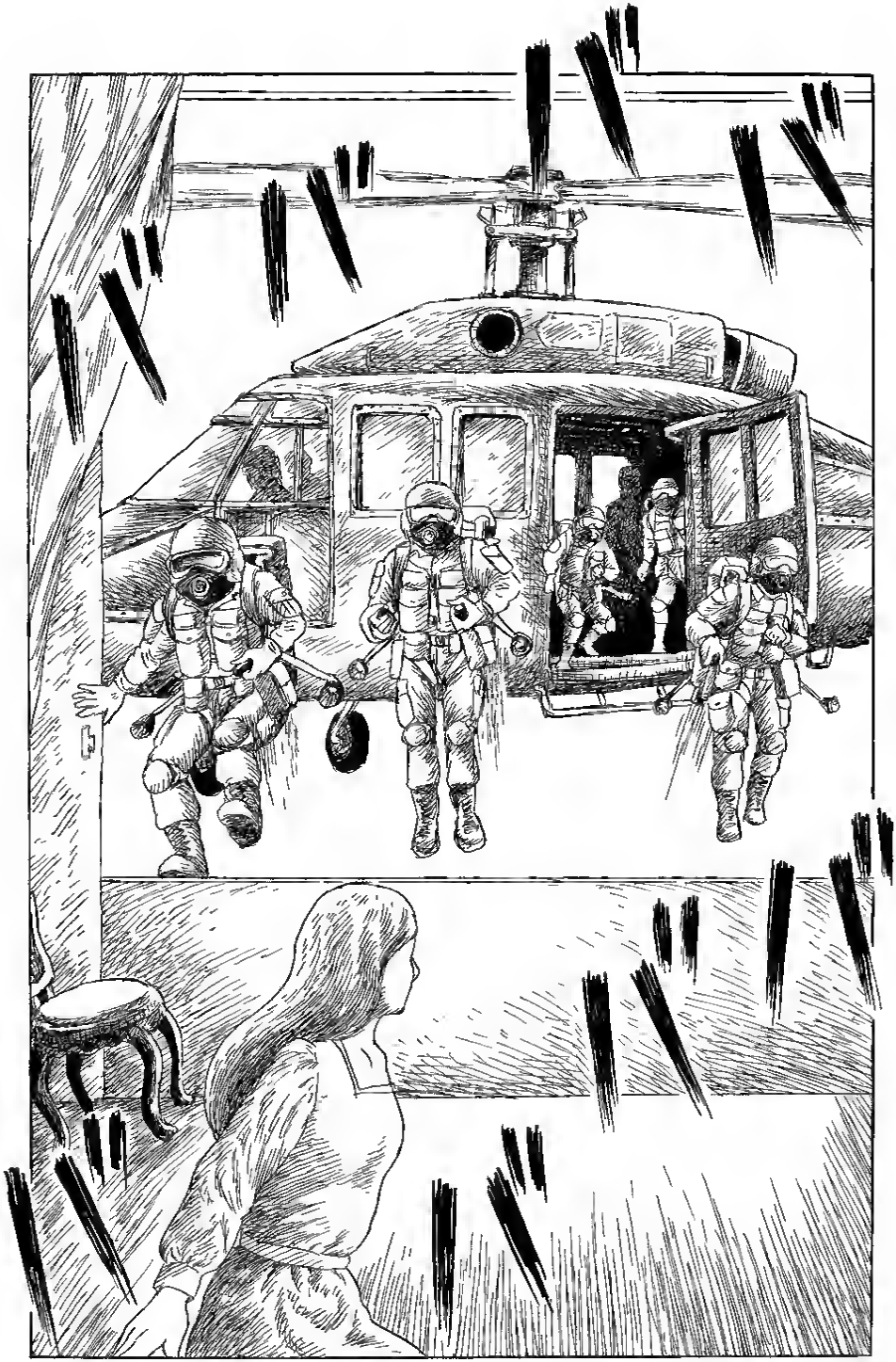

I'M SURE SHE DIDN'T REALIZE A PERSON CAME OVER...
OH THANK GOODNESS, SHE'S ASLEEP.

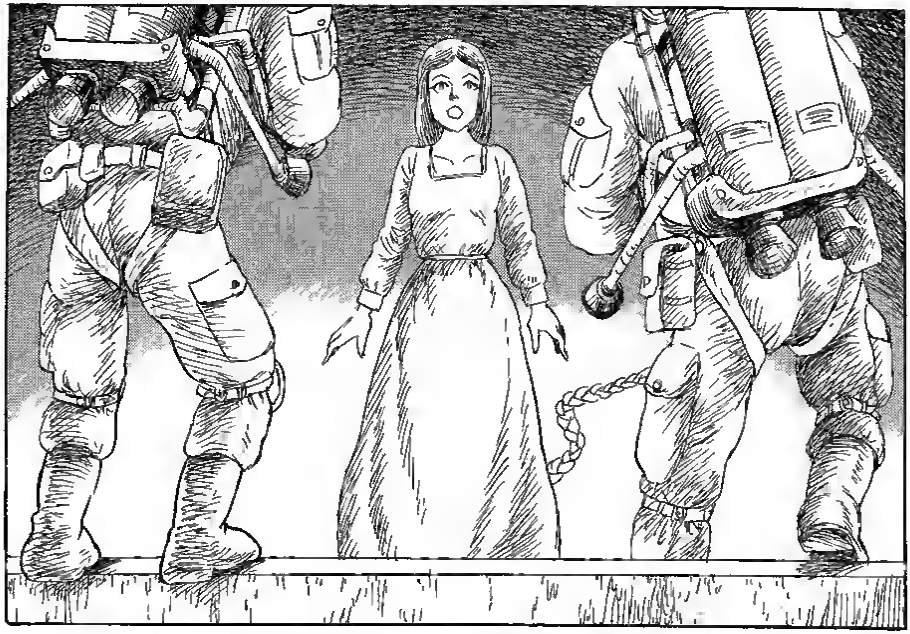

AND ONCE HE DOES, HE'LL FINALLY TAKE ME AWAY FROM HERE.
HE PROMISED SO I'M SURE HE WILL.

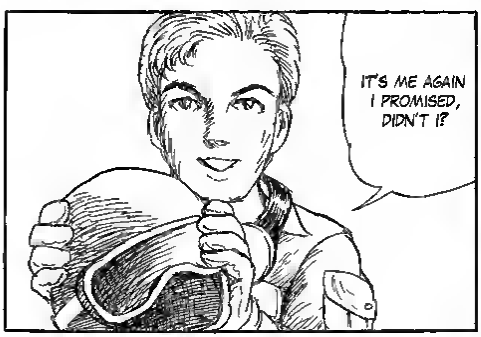
I WONDER IF HE'LL REALLY COME...

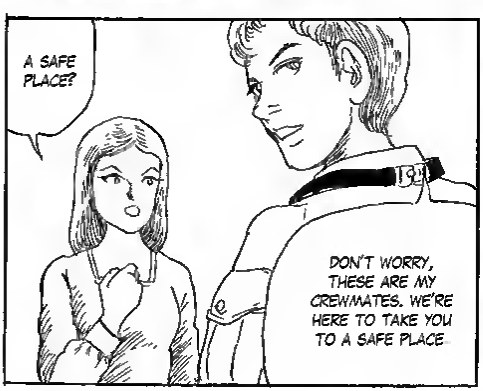

WILL HE COME TODAY? OR MAYBE TOMORROW?

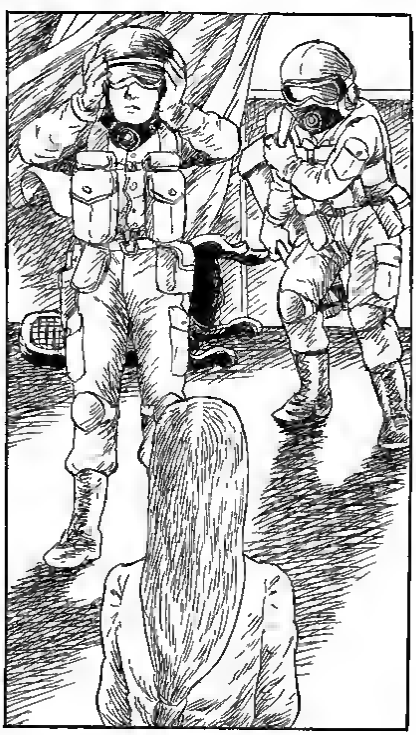

RAPUNZEL, RAPUNZEL...

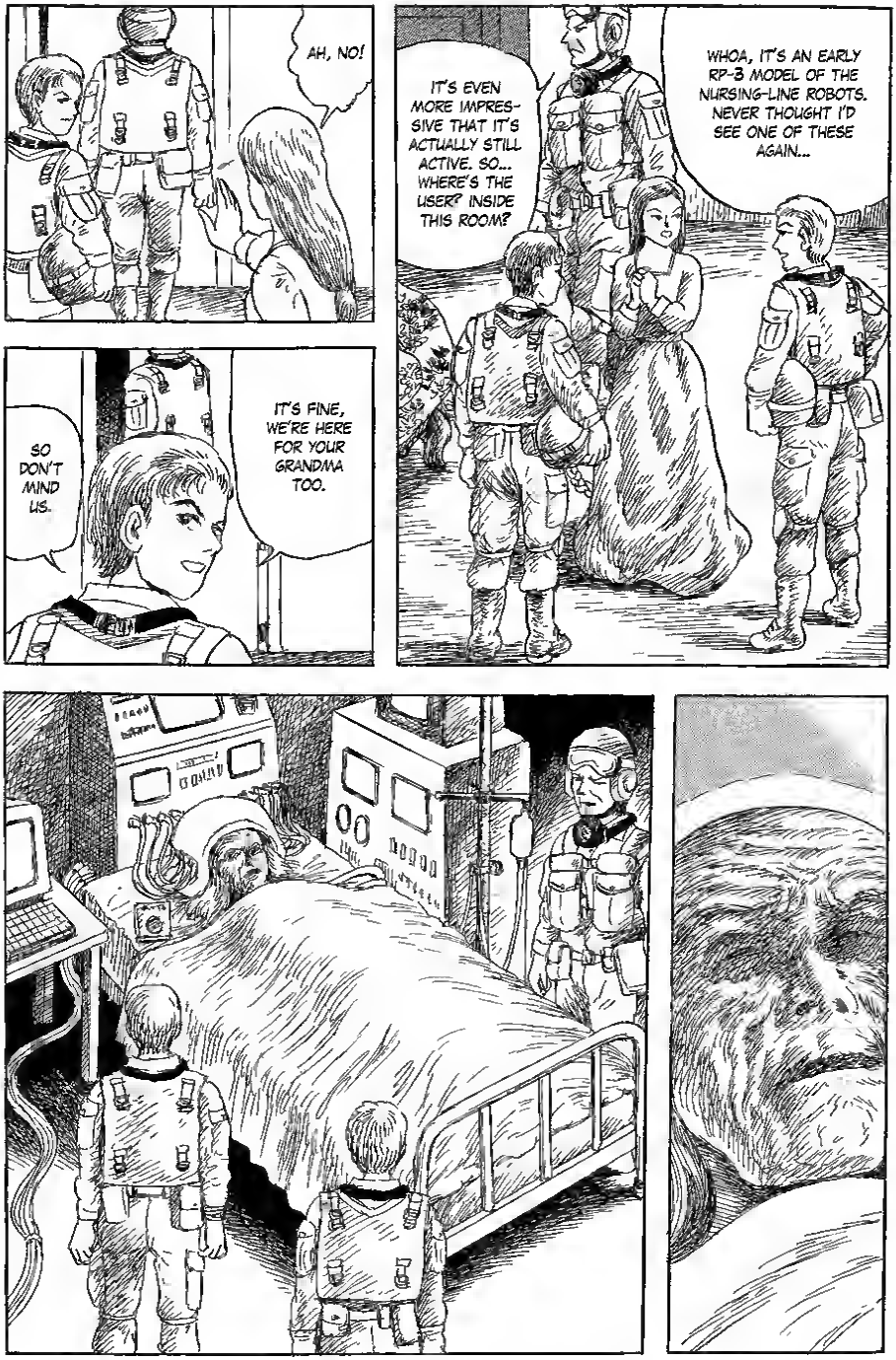


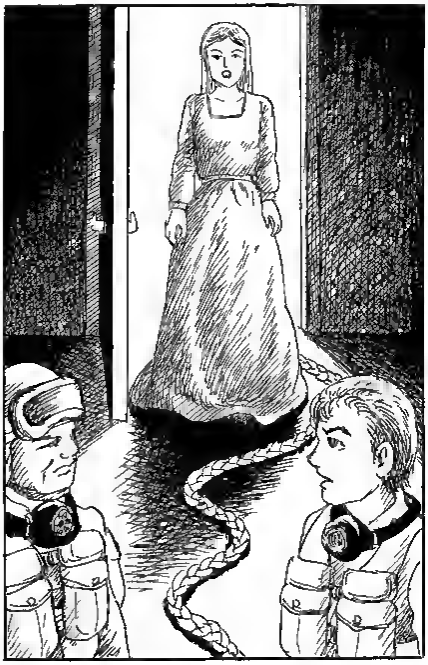


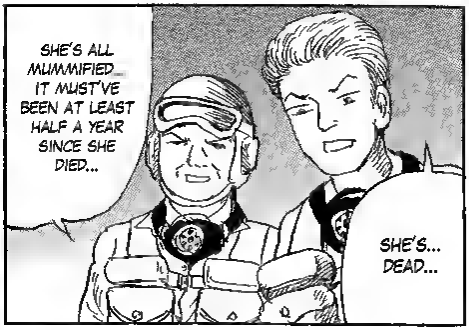

IT'S ME AGAIN I PROMISED, DIDN'T I?

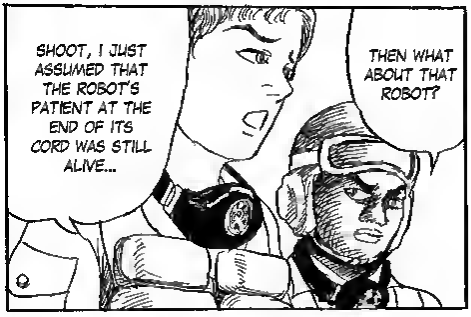

A SAFE PLACE?
DON'T WORRY, THESE ARE MY CREWMATES. WE'RE HERE TO TAKE YOU TO A SAFE PLACE

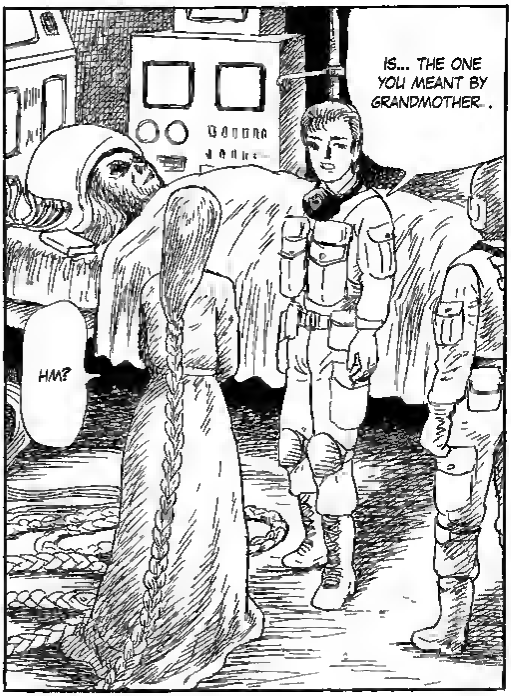


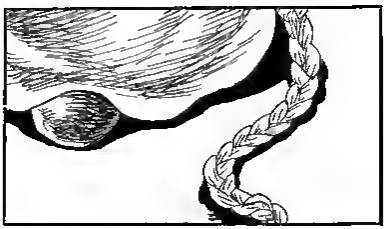

AH, NO!
IT'S FINE, WE'RE HERE FOR YOUR GRANDMA TOO.
SO DON'T MIND US.
IT'S EVEN MORE IMPRESSIVE THAT IT'S ACTUALLY STILL ACTIVE. SO... WHERE'S THE USER? INSIDE THIS ROOM?
WHOA, IT'S AN EARLY RP-3 MODEL OF THE NURSING-LINE ROBOTS. NEVER THOUGHT I'D SEE ONE OF THESE AGAIN...

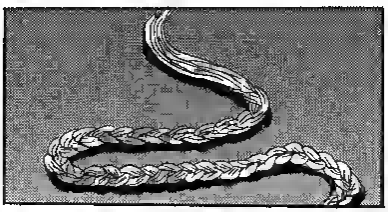


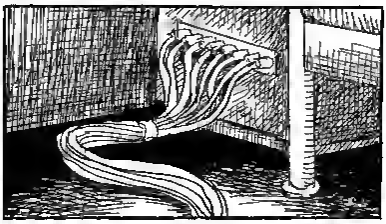

SHE'S ALL MUMMIFIED... IT MUST'VE BEEN AT LEAST HALF A YEAR SINCE SHE DIED...
SHE'S... DEAD...


SHOOT, I JUST ASSUMED THAT THE ROBOT'S PATIENT AT THE END OF ITS CORD WAS STILL ALIVE...
THEN WHAT ABOUT THAT ROBOT?


IS... THE ONE YOU MEANT BY GRANDMOTHER..
HM?

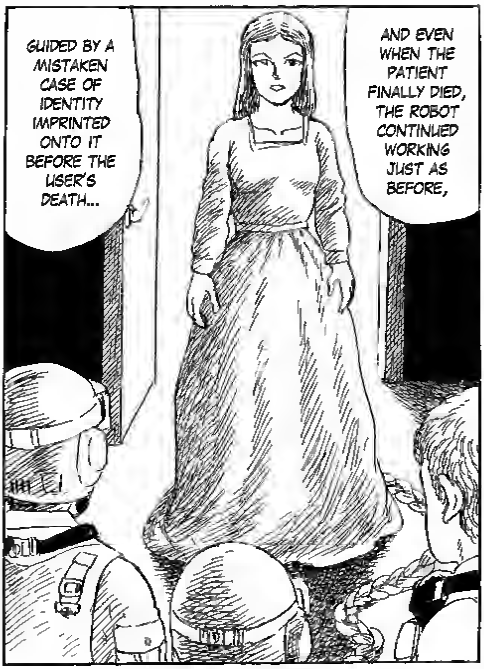


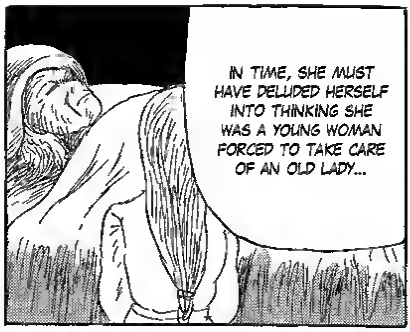




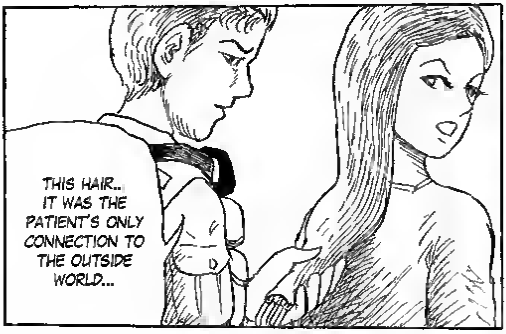
BUT THEN... WHO'S YOUR CURRENT USER?
THAT'S HER RIGHT HERE.
I'M GUESSING THIS OLD LADY WAS A VICTIM OF PARALYSIS.
THE ROBOT'S BEEN DISCONNECTED FROM ITS USER, MOST LIKELY BEFORE THIS PATIENT'S DEATH...
AND THEY CAN TAKE CARE OF THEIR OWN BODIES THAT WAY TOO.
BUT THIS ONE'S AN EARLY MODEL THAT USES A PHYSICAL CORD TO CONNECT THE PATIENT AND THE ROBOT. I DIDN'T THINK THERE WAS STILL SUCH AN OLD MODEL EXISTING..
THE RP-3 NURSING ROBOTS, COMMONLY KNOWN AS RAPUNZELS, PROVIDE VIRTUAL REALITY CARE.
THE PATIENTS SEE, HEAR, TALK, AND EVEN FEEL THROUGH THEIR CONNECTED RAPUNZELS.

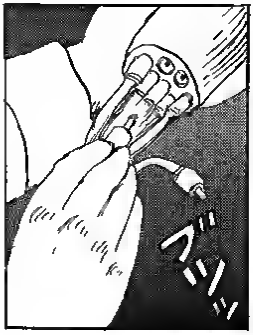
Rapunzel
AND IT SEEMS MEMORIES OF CERTAIN STORYBOOK CHARACTERS HAVE BEEN MIXED UP IN THE ROBOT'S BRAIN TOO.
SOME OF THE USER'S PERSONALITY MUST'VE BEEN TRANSFERRED TO THE ROBOT AFTER SUCH A LONG PERIOD OF NEURAL SYNCHRONIZATION.
BUT THE USER'S LONG BEEN...
MEANWHILE, SHE CAME TO BELIEVE THAT HER REAL BODY WAS THE ROBOT'S.
PERHAPS THIS AROSE AS A SUBCONSCIOUS WISH TO DENY HER OLD DYING BODY AS HER TRUE SELF.
BUT SHE TOLD ME THAT SHE WAS HOSPITALIZED HERE SINCE 12 AND THAT SHE HAD A GRANDMA HERE.
MY GUESS IS THAT AS THE PATIENT GREW SENILE, SHE BEGAN TO SEPARATE HER TWO DIFFERENT EXISTENCES. HER ORIGINAL PHYSICAL EXISTENCE BECAME HER "GRANDMOTHER."
IT MUST HAVE BEEN MORE COMFORTABLE TO USE SUCH A LOOK-ALIKE.
IT LOOKS LIKE THIS ROBOT'S A CUSTOM-MODEL BUILT TO SPECIFICALLY RESEMBLE THE PATIENT. THE GIRL IN THIS PICTURE LOOKS JUST A LITTLE YOUNGER THAN THE ROBOT.
LOOK. I THINK THESE ARE PICTURES OF THE PATIENT WHEN SHE WAS YOUNG.


GUIDED BY A MISTAKEN CASE OF IDENTITY IMPRINTED ONTO IT BEFORE THE USER'S DEATH...
AND EVEN WHEN THE PATIENT FINALLY DIED, THE ROBOT CONTINUED WORKING JUST AS BEFORE,


IN TIME, SHE MUST HAVE DELUDED HERSELF INTO THINKING SHE WAS A YOUNG WOMAN FORCED TO TAKE CARE OF AN OLD LADY...

A HELPLESS AND LONELY GIRL WHOSE SELF-IDENTITY BECAME FURTHER FUSED WITH THAT OF RAPUNZEL FROM THE FAIRY TALE...


THIS HAIR... IT WAS THE PATIENT'S ONLY CONNECTION TO THE OUTSIDE WORLD...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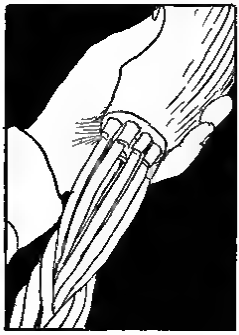
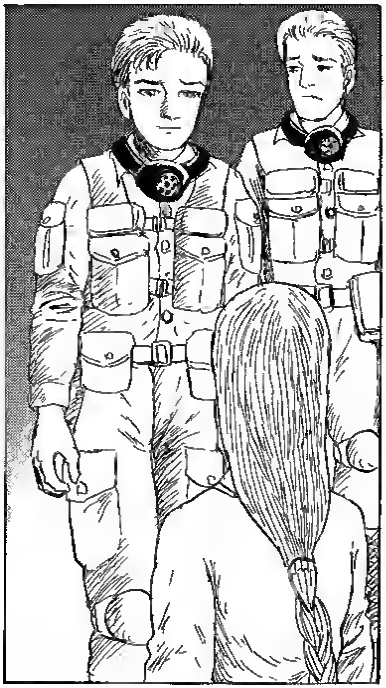
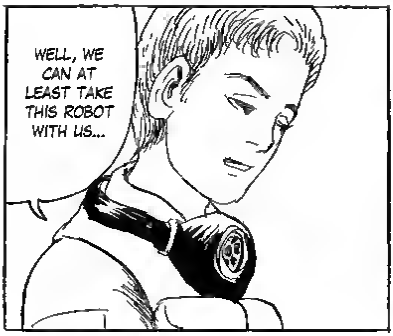
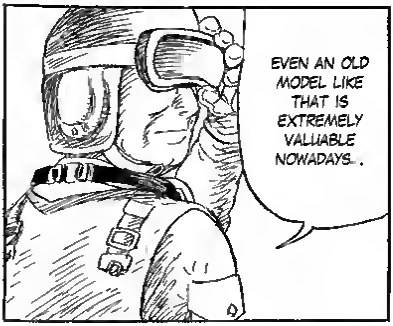
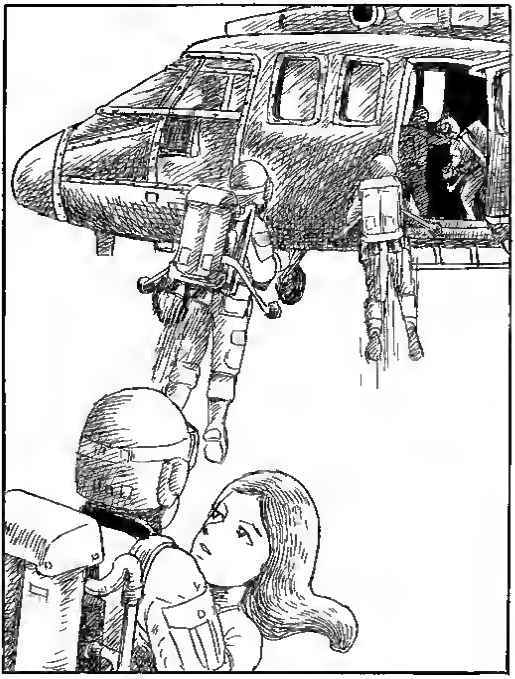


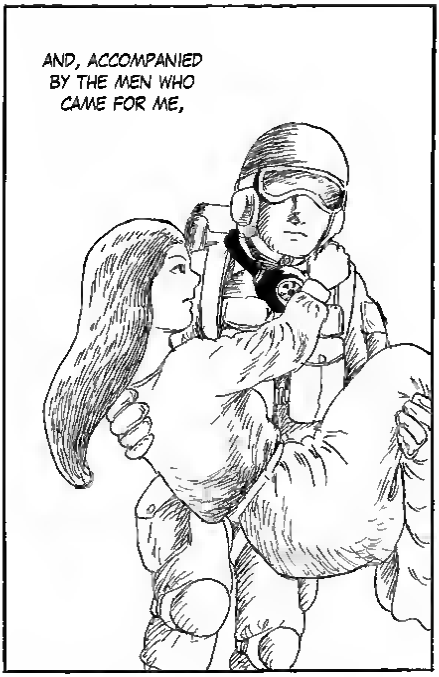


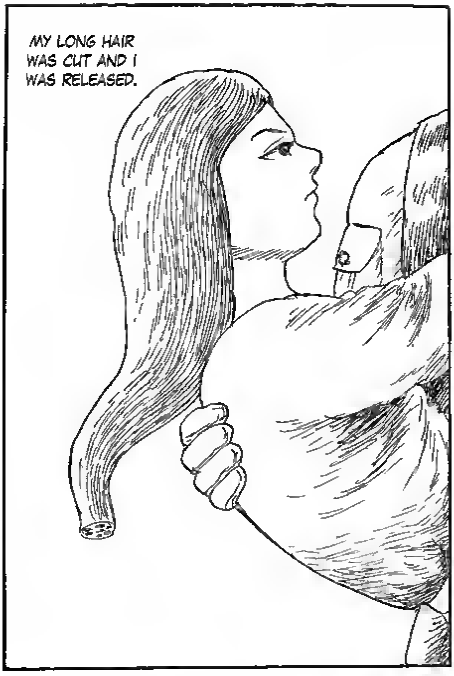

WELL, WE CAN AT LEAST TAKE THIS ROBOT WITH US...

SO WHAT DO WE DO NOW?


EVEN AN OLD MODEL LIKE THAT IS EXTREMELY VALUABLE NOWADAYS...




AND, ACCOMPANIED BY THE MEN WHO CAME FOR ME,


MY LONG HAIR WAS CUT AND I WAS RELEASED.

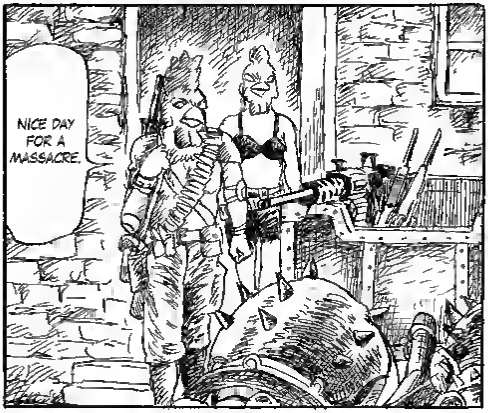
I FINALLY MADE MY WAY OUTSIDE THE TOWER...

Herr Korbes

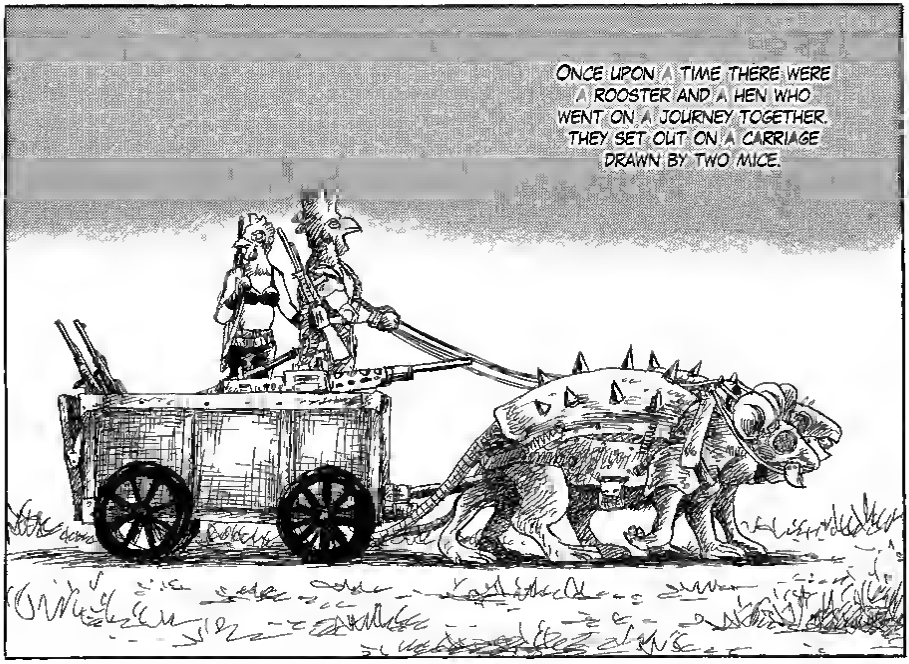
MMHMM
IS THE CARRIAGE READY?

YEAH
YOU READY?

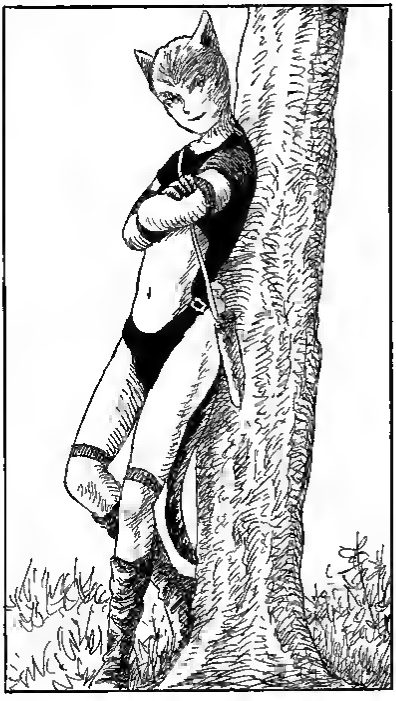
FINE WEATHER.


NICE DAY FOR A MASSACRE.

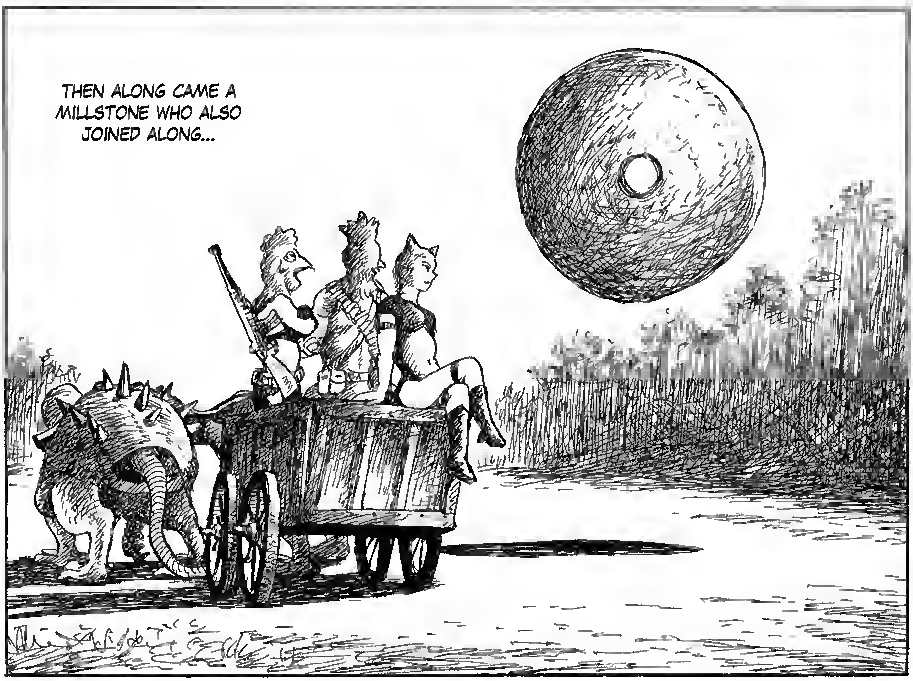
LET'S ROLL.

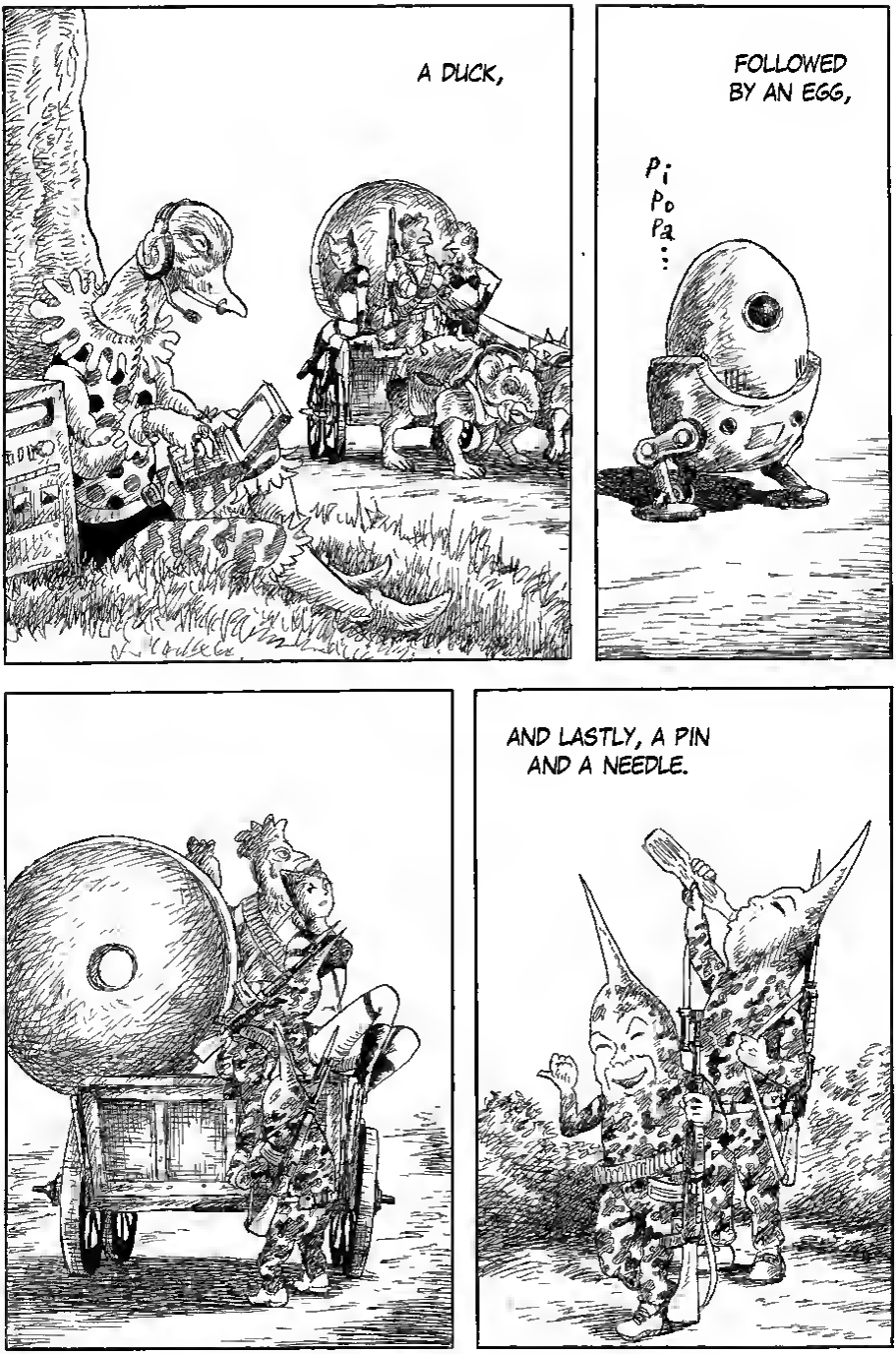

ONCE UPON A TIME THERE WERE A ROOSTER AND A HEN WHO WENT ON A JOURNEY TOGETHER. THEY SET OUT ON A CARRIAGE DRAWN BY TWO MICE.

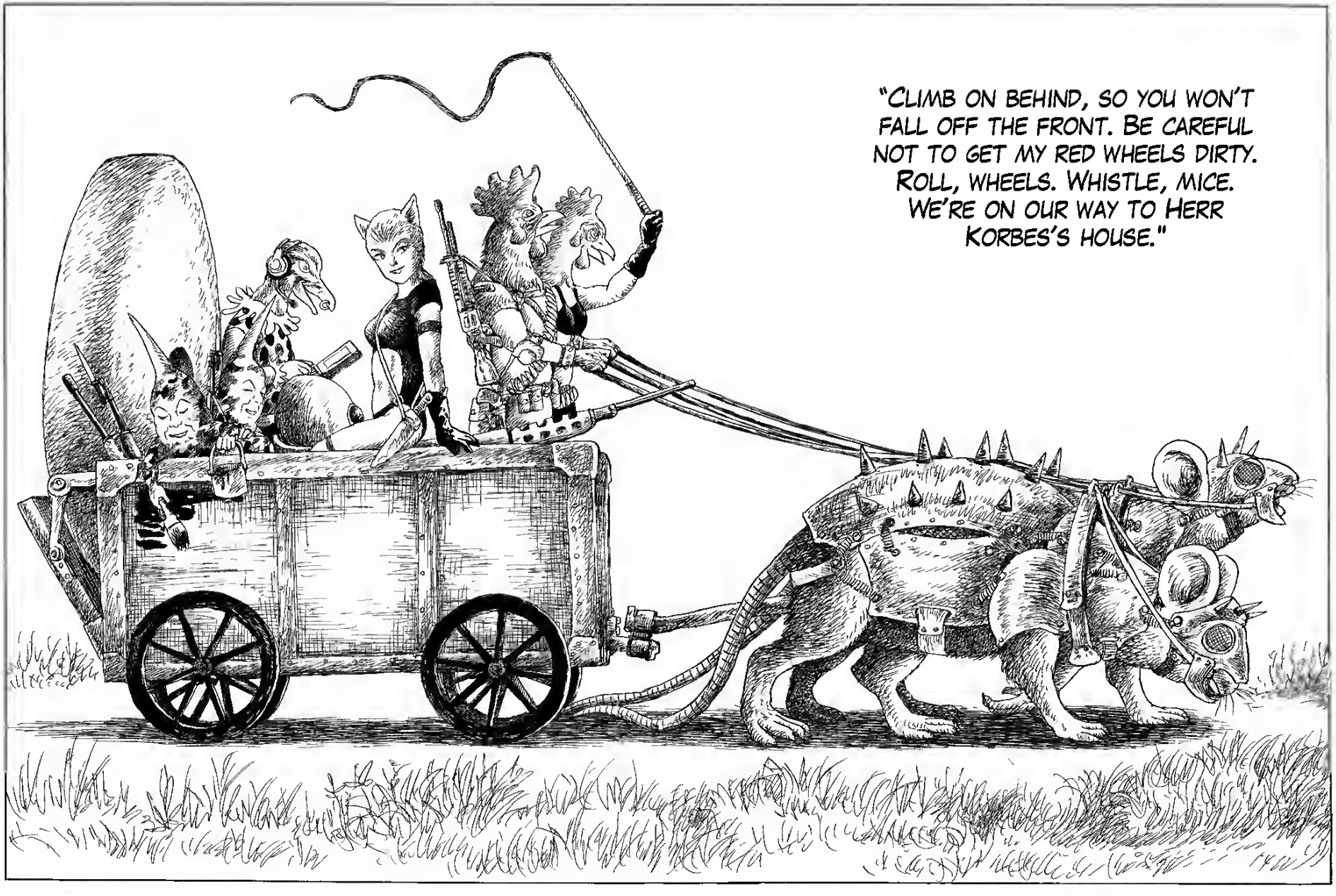
AND WHERE ARE YOU CHICKENS GOING?
TO HERR KORBES.



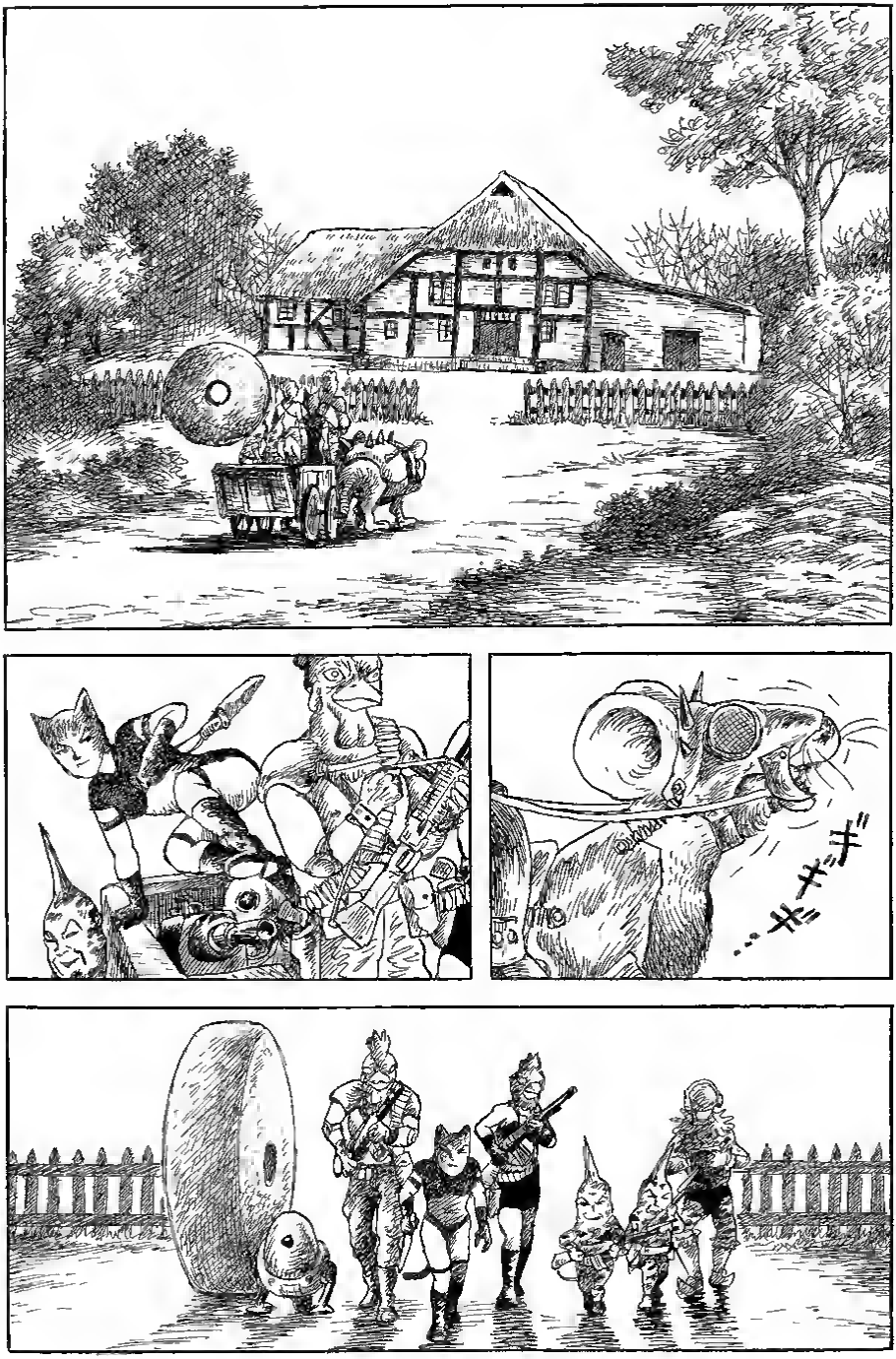
HOP ON.
MIND IF I JOIN?


THEN ALONG CAME A MILLSTONE WHO ALSO JOINED ALONG...


A DUCK,
FOLLOWED BY AN EGG,
Pi Po Pa...
AND LASTLY, A PIN AND A NEEDLE.


"Climb on behind, so you won't fall off the front. Be careful not to get my red wheels dirty. Roll, wheels. Whistle, mice. We're on our way to Herr Korbes's house."

*From D.L. Ashliman's translation of Herr Korbes 128



WHAA!?
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バン！！
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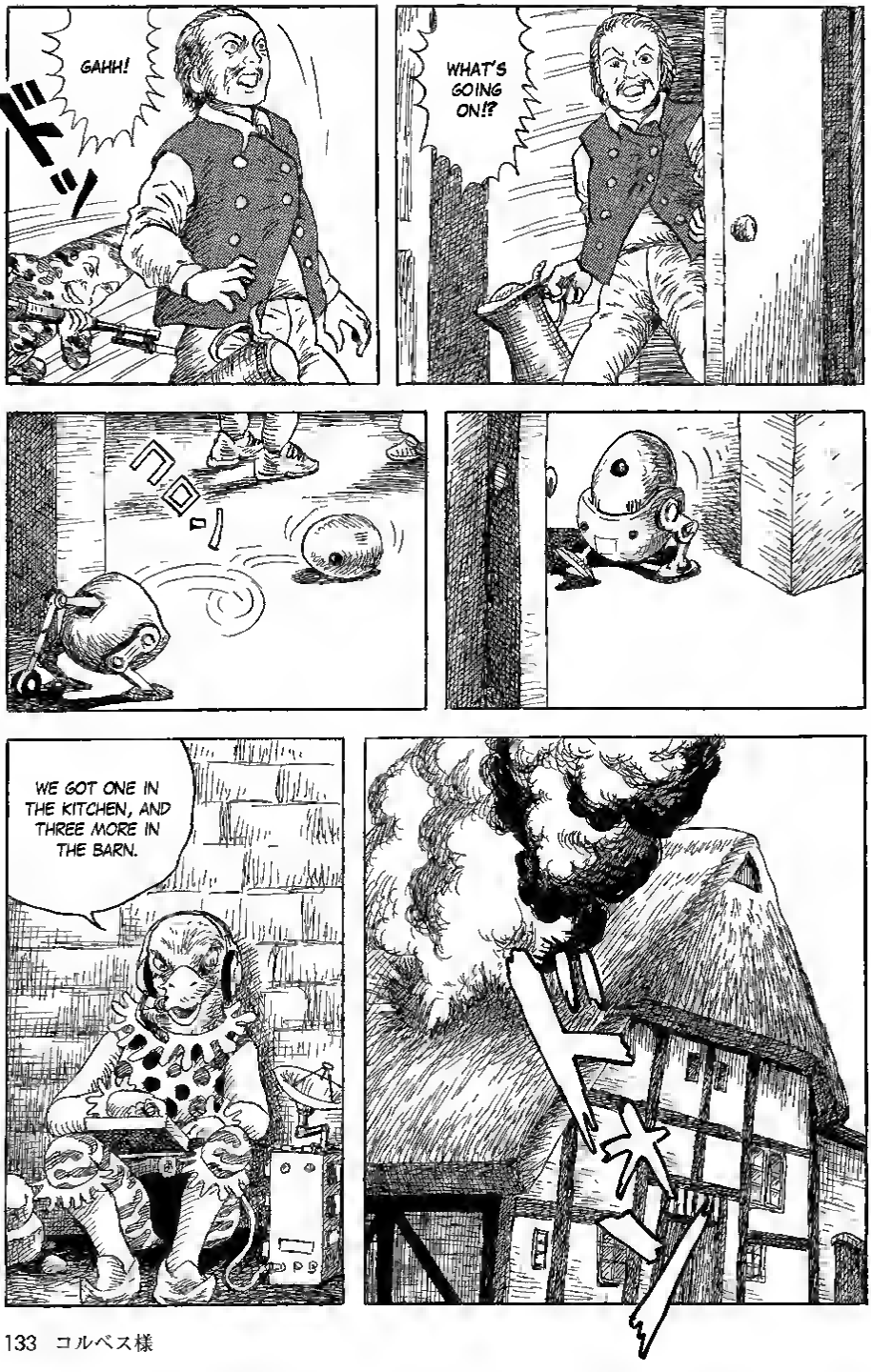
GAHH!
ドッ
WHAT'S GOING ON!?
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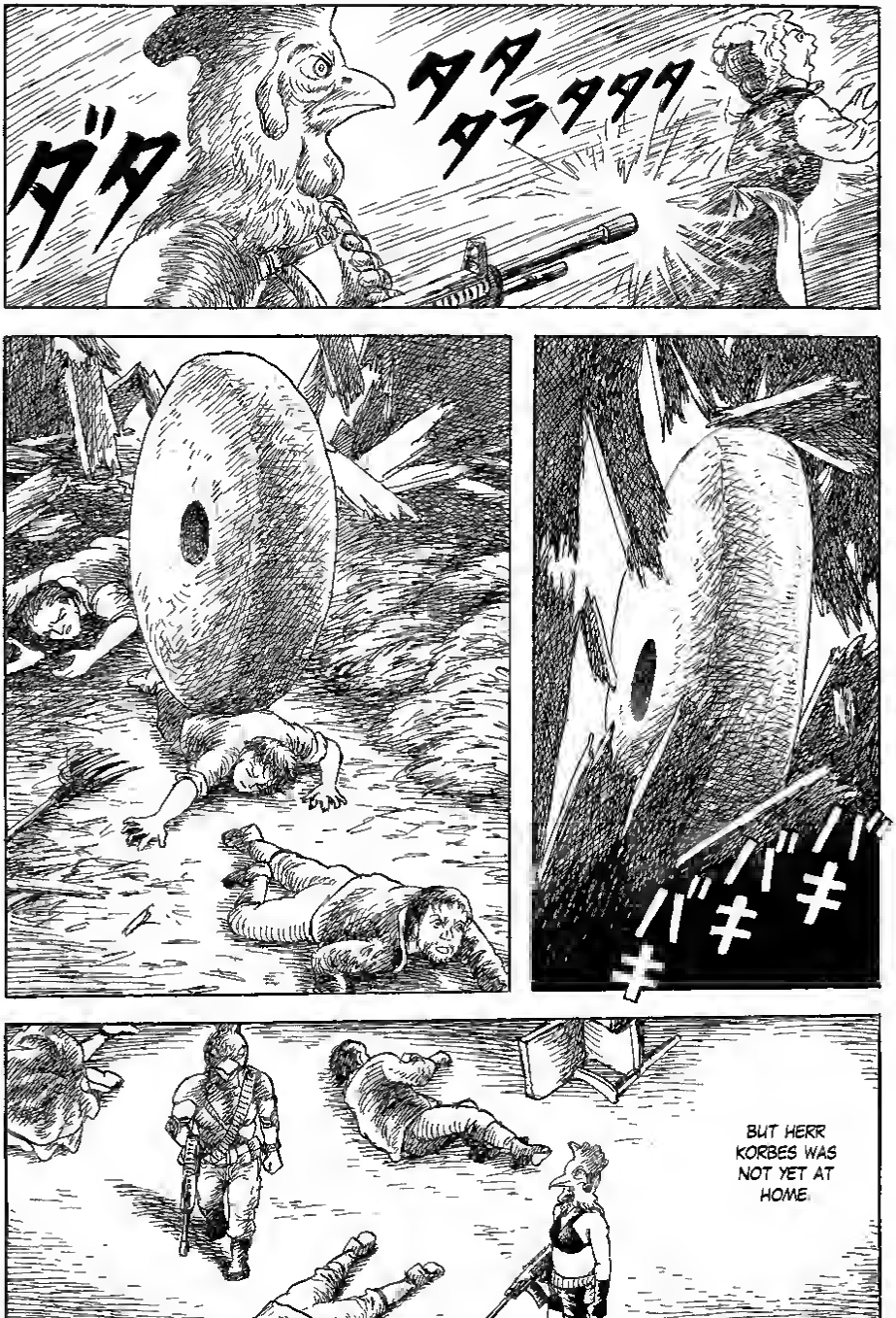
WE GOT ONE IN THE KITCHEN, AND THREE MORE IN THE BARN.
ドオオオン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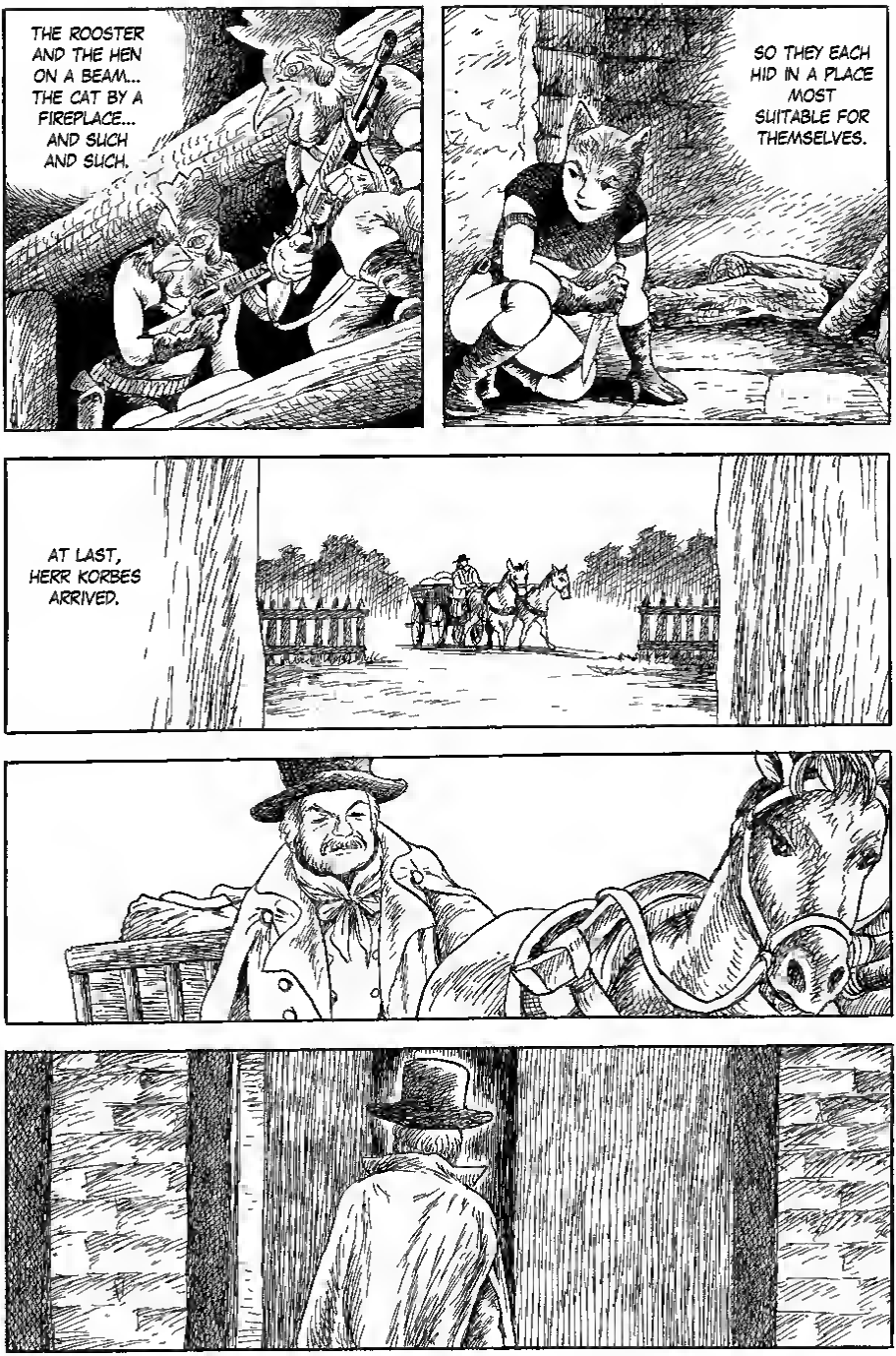
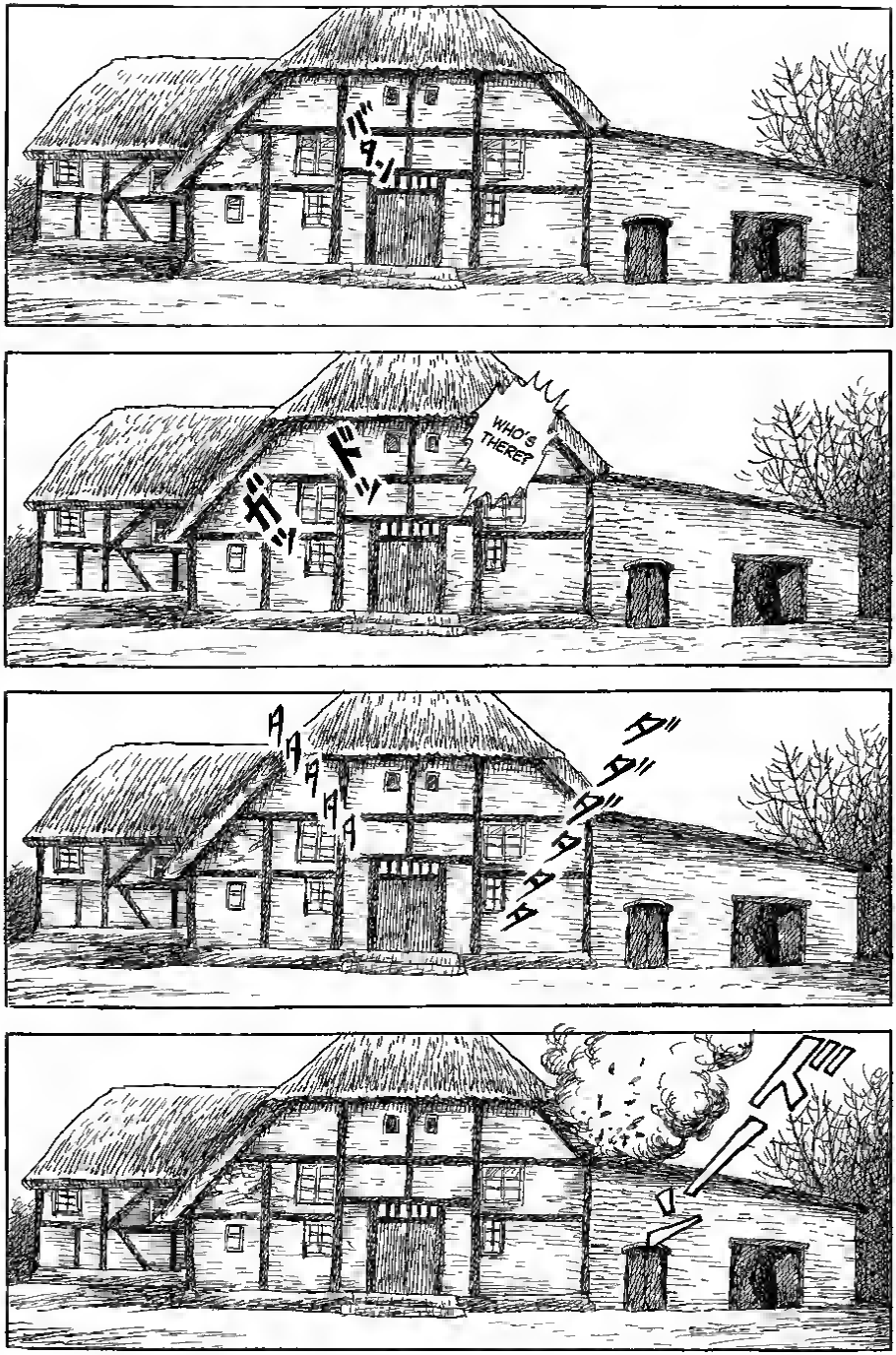
BUT HERR KORBES WAS NOT YET AT HOME.


THE ROOSTER AND THE HEN ON A BEAM... THE CAT BY A FIREPLACE... AND SUCH AND SUCH.
SO THEY EACH HID IN A PLACE MOST SUITABLE FOR THEMSELVES.
AT LAST, HERR KORBES ARRIVED.


バタン
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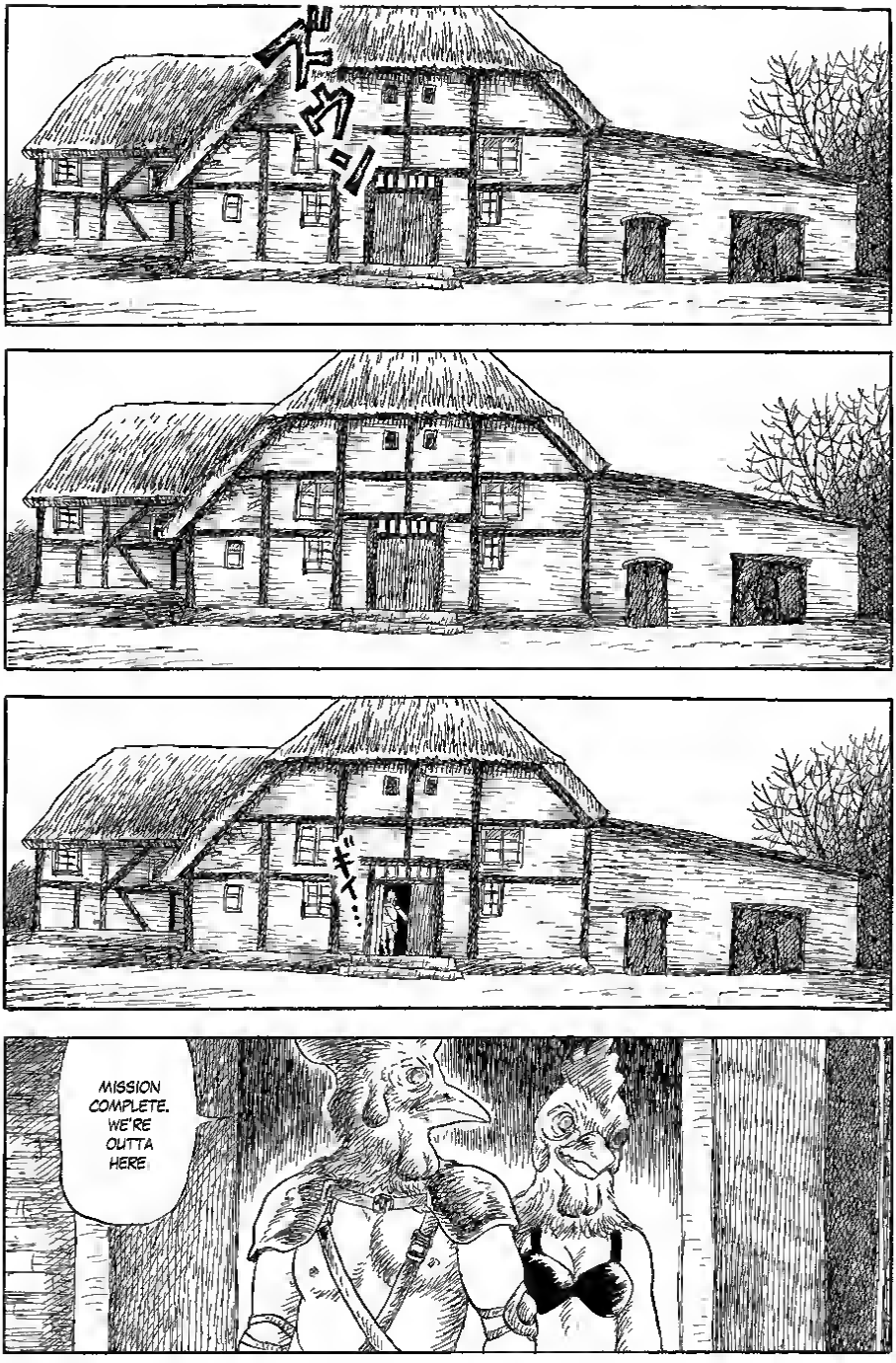
ガッ
WHO'S THERE?
ドン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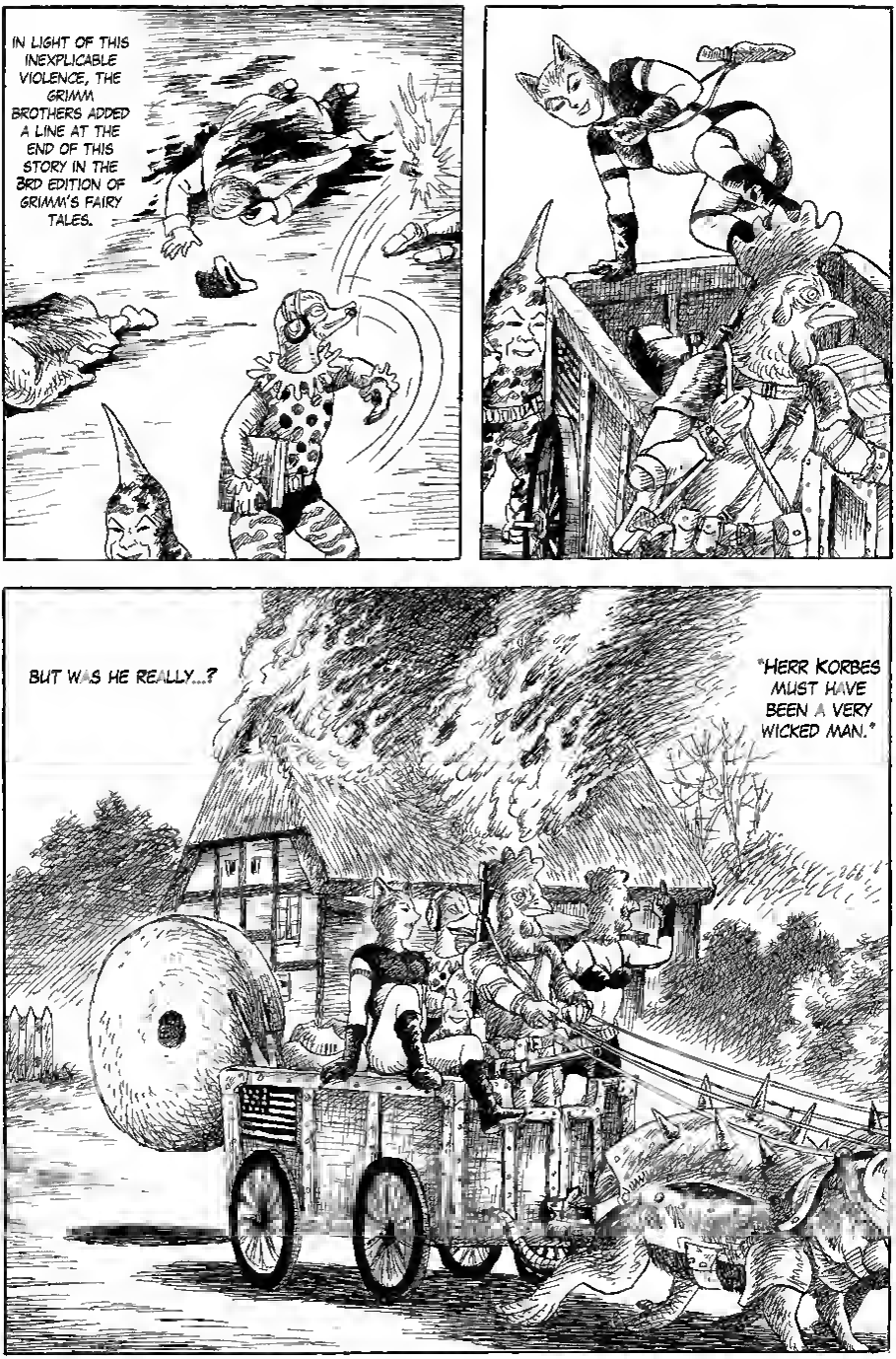
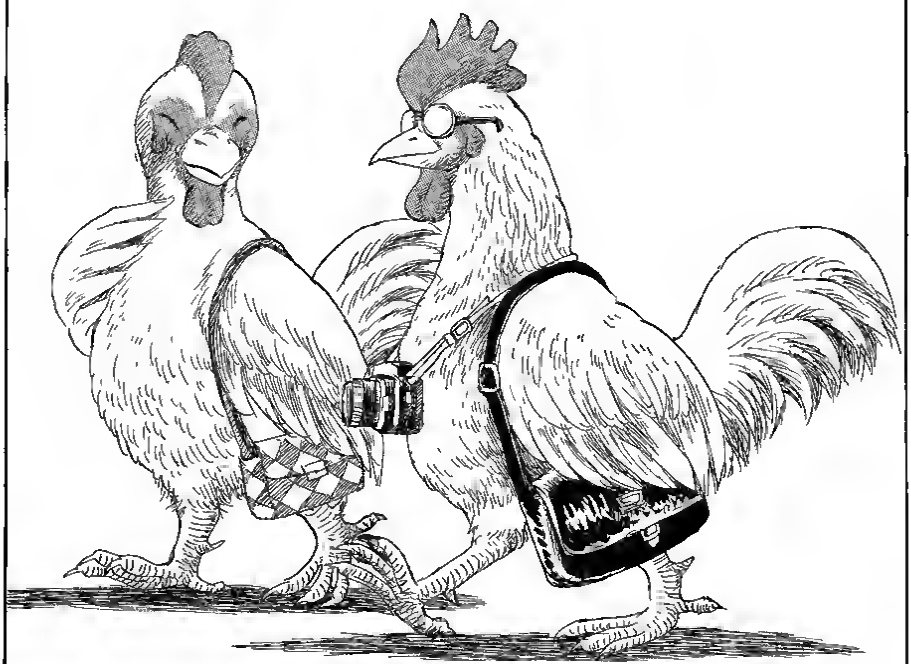
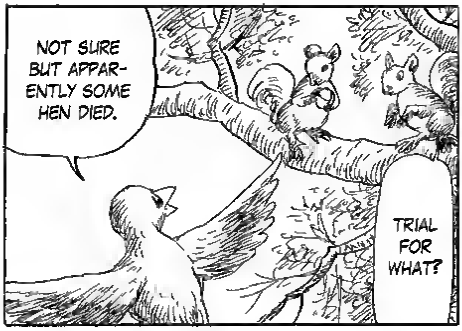
ギィ…
MISSION COMPLETE. WE'RE OUTTA HERE

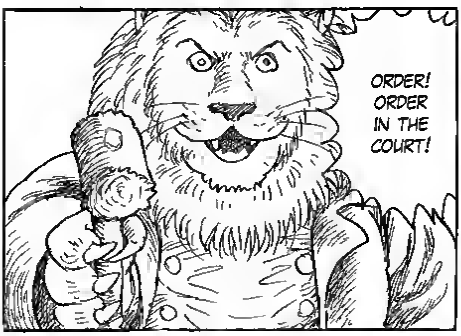

IN LIGHT OF THIS INEXPLICABLE VIOLENCE, THE GRIMM BROTHERS ADDED A LINE AT THE END OF THIS STORY IN THE 3RD EDITION OF GRIMM'S FAIRY TALES.
"HERR KORBES MUST HAVE BEEN A VERY WICKED MAN."
BUT WAS HE REALLY...?

The Death of the Little Hen




NOT SURE BUT APPARENTLY SOME HEN DIED.
TRIAL FOR WHAT?

TRIAL! TRIAL!


ORDER! ORDER IN THE COURT!

THE DEATH OF A LITTLE HEN, YOUR HONOUR.
A HOMICIDE, EH?

LET US BEGIN THE TRIAL! AHEM, WHAT IS THE NATURE OF THIS CASE AGAIN?

YES, I SWEAR BEFORE THE COURT THAT I AM THE HUSBAND OF THE DECEASED HEN. OH LORD, HOW DID THINGS EVER COME TO THIS. .
YOUR HONOUR, I PRESENT TO THE COURT THE HUSBAND OF THE DECEASED.
YOUR HONOUR, I BELIEVE THE TERM GALLICIDE MIGHT BE MORE APPROPRIATE.
KEEP YOUR PEDANTIC OBJECTIONS TO YOURSELF, PIG!
IT WAS DURING THEN WHEN I FOUND A MOST TREMENDOUS WALNUT.
Walnut Picking Tour
THE DAY BEGAN WITH US GOING ON A WALNUT PICKING TOUR IN ORDER TO CELEBRATE OUR 10TH ANNIVERSARY. MY WIFE LOVED TO EAT WALNUTS, YOU SEE...
ALAS, UPON MY RETURN, I SAW MY WIFE CHOKING ON THE LARGE WALNUT KERNEL I HAD FOUND.
BUT I THEN WENT TO GO GET A CAMERA TO TAKE COMMEMO-RATIVE PICTURE.
I IMMEDIATELY CRACKED THE SHELL OPEN TO GIFT THE KERNEL TO MY WIFE.

BUT BY THE TIME I RETURNED, IT WAS TOO LATE...
AND SO I RUSHED OFF TO BRING BACK SOME WATER..
D... DEAR, PLEASE! B... BRING WATER O-OR I'LL... I'LL...!
ABOUT THAT, YOUR HONOUR. MY INVESTIGATIONS HAVE REVEALED THAT THIS CASE MIGHT NOT BE SO CLEAR-CUT...
DETECTIVE WOLF! DID YOU ASSEMBLE US JUDGES HERE TODAY TO PRESIDE OVER A MERE CASE OF ACCIDENTAL DEATH!?
WHAT!? SO THE VICTIM MERELY DIED FROM CHOKING ON A WALNUT!? I THOUGHT THIS WAS SUPPOSED TO BE A HOMICI- I MEAN, GALLICIDE!
HOW DO YOU EXPLAIN YOURSELF, ROOSTER!?
IS THAT SO? EXPLAIN FURTHER.
THERE'S A LONG STORY BEHIND THAT, YOUR HONOUR
WHEN I WENT TO THE FOUNTAIN TO ASK FOR WATER, THE FOUNTAIN SAID TO ME:
THE FIRST SUSPICIOUS POINT IS THAT THE ROOSTER TOOK AN UNUSUALLY LONG TIME IN BRINGING BACK A CUP OF WATER
THIS WAS WITNESSED BY THE SQUIRREL GATEKEEPER OF THE WALNUT GARDEN.

UNFORTUNATELY, AS THE FOUNTAIN CANNOT MOVE, WE HAVE HIS LAWYER HERE TO PRESENT HIS AFFIDAVIT.
THE FOUNTAIN DID WHAT!? BRING HIM TO THE COURT IMMEDIATELY!
THAT IS WHY I TOOK SO LONG.
IN RETURN FOR WATER, BRING ME THE RED SILK FROM A BRIDE.
THE ROOSTER COULD STILL HAVE MADE IT IN TIME EVEN AFTER FETCHING THE SILK!
YOUR HONOUR, I HAVE EVIDENCE THAT THE FOUNTAIN WAS ON BAD TERMS WITH THE HEN DUE TO A PAST INCIDENT IN WHICH THE HEN BATHED INSIDE HIM WITHOUT HIS PERMISSION.
FURTHERMORE, THE REQUEST IN EXCHANGE OF HIS SERVICE TO PROVIDE WATER IS WITHIN REASONABLE LIMITS, YOUR HONOUR
THE FOUNTAIN WAS IN URGENT NEED OF A RED SILK FOR PROPER DISPLAY OF HIMSELF.
WHOSE BRIDE IS SHE, ANYWAYS?
NOT ANYONE IN PARTICULAR. SHE'S BEEN A BRIDE FOR THE PAST 10 YEARS NOW...
LA LALA LALALA...
YOUR HONOUR, I HAVE PREPARED THE BRIDE TO TESTIFY AS A WITNESS IF YOU WISH.
YES, SEND HER IN AT ONCE!

A BRIDE TO BEING A BRIDE, EH?
YES, SOME-THING OF THE SORT.
HER GROOMS HAVE RANGED FROM A WILLOW TREE TO A WOODEN STICK, AND EVEN SUPPOSEDLY A FOREST FAIRY THAT NO ONE ELSE CAN SEE.
I BEG YOUR PARDON?
THAT'S JUST WHO SHE IS. SHE'S BEEN MARRIED TWENTY-SOMETHING TIMES OVER THE PAST DECADE YET SHE STILL PERSISTS IN BEING A BRIDE
OH YEEEES, I DID, BUT I ASKED THE ROOSTER FOR A TEENSY WEENSY FAVOUR TO GET BACK MY FLOWER WREATH HANGING FROM A BARN DOOR, YOU SEE.
ANSWER ME, BRIDE. DID YOU GIVE YOUR RED SILK TO THE ROOSTER?
LA LALALA LALA.. I HOPE YOU'LL ALL COME TO MY WEDDING NEXT WEEK. MY GROOM FROM PLUTO WILL BE LOOKING FORWARD TO YOUR ATTENDANCE AS WELL.
SEEING NO OTHER CHOICE, I THEN WENT TO THE DOG WHO THEN TOLD ME THUS:
HOWEVER, THE DOOR WANTED ME TO BRING BACK ITS LOCK AND KEY WHICH THE DOG TOOK.
IS THIS TRUE, ROOSTER?
YES, SO I RAN OVER TO THE BARN DOOR RIGHT AWAY.

I RAN BACK TO MY WIFE AS FAST AS I COULD, OF COURSE.
WHAT DID YOU DO THEN?
BRING ME THE WALNUT STUCK INSIDE THE HEN'S THROAT FIRST.
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TO GET THE LOCK AND KEY, WHICH I TOOK BACK TO THE DOOR.
RIGHT, RIGHT...
I THEN TOOK THE WALNUT BACK TO THE DOG,
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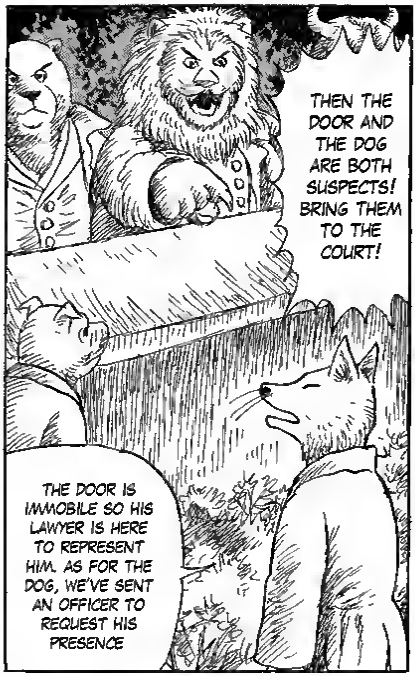
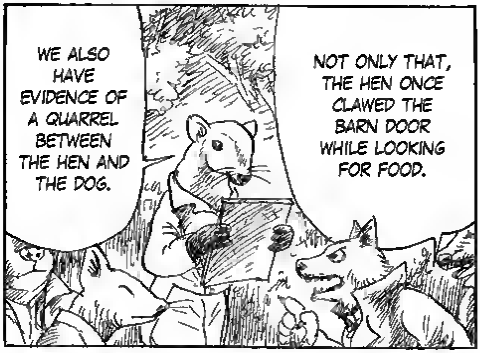
THE BRIDE PRESENTED ME HER SILK, WHICH I THEN TOOK BACK TO THE FOUNTAIN.
THE DOOR THEN GAVE ME THE WREATH, AND THOUGH I WAS ALMOST OUT OF BREATH, I RAN BACK TO THE BRIDE.

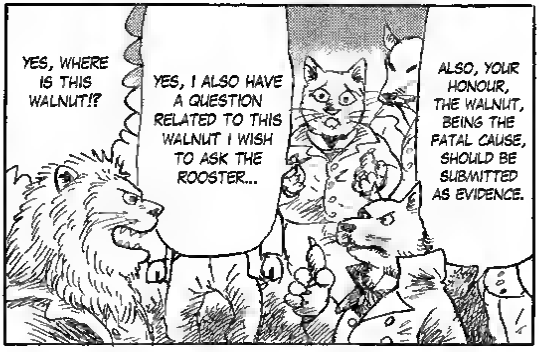
BUT... IT WAS TOO LATE... SNIFF... MY WIFE HAD... ALREADY PASSED ON...
ONCE I FINALLY GOT MY CUP OF WATER, I FRANTICALLY RAN TOWARDS BACK TO MY WIFE.
I SEE... SO IN SHORT, THE HEN PASSED AWAY BECAUSE IT TOOK SO LONG TO BRING BACK A CUP OF WATER.
IF WE'RE DONE SUSPECTING THE FOUNTAIN... WE SHOULD NEXT QUESTION THE BRIDE
YOU'RE IMPLYING EITHER THE FOUNTAIN, BRIDE, DOOR, DOG... OR EVEN ALL OF THEM MAY HAVE HAD A HAND IN THE HEN'S DEATH?
YES, BUT THE KEY POINT HERE IS THAT SOMEONE MAY HAVE HARBOURED MALICIOUS INTENT AND DELIBERATELY DELAYED THIS RETRIEVAL OF WATER.
NOT SO FAST. I HAVE RECORDS HERE THAT STATE THE HEN ONCE ATE THE BRIDE'S FLOWER GARDEN, MISTAKING IT FOR HER CHICKEN FEED.
SHE'S RIGHT, YOUR HONOUR. SHE HAS NO MOTIVE FOR WANTING THE HEN DEAD.
I'M A PURE BRIDE. I HAVE NO HAND IN ANYTHING SO GRUESOME.

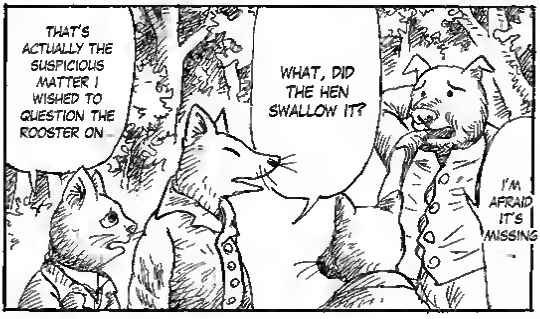

THEN THE DOOR AND THE DOG ARE BOTH SUSPECTS! BRING THEM TO THE COURT!
THE DOOR IS IMMOBILE SO HIS LAWYER IS HERE TO REPRESENT HIM. AS FOR THE DOG, WE'VE SENT AN OFFICER TO REQUEST HIS PRESENCE

I CAN'T RECALL...
IS THIS TRUE?


WE ALSO HAVE EVIDENCE OF A QUARREL BETWEEN THE HEN AND THE DOG.
NOT ONLY THAT, THE HEN ONCE CLAWED THE BARN DOOR WHILE LOOKING FOR FOOD.

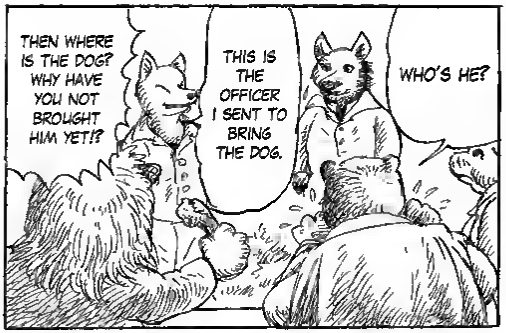
FINE, THEN BRING THE CORPSE FOR A CURSORY EXAMINATION FOR NOW!

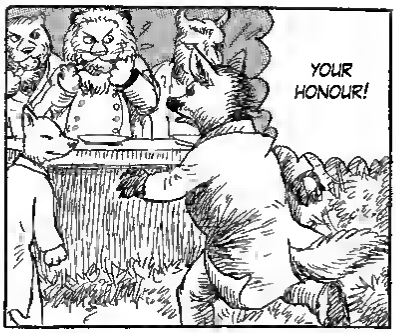

YES, WHERE IS THIS WALNUT!?
YES, I ALSO HAVE A QUESTION RELATED TO THIS WALNUT I WISH TO ASK THE ROOSTER...
ALSO, YOUR HONOUR, THE WALNUT, BEING THE FATAL CAUSE, SHOULD BE SUBMITTED AS EVIDENCE.

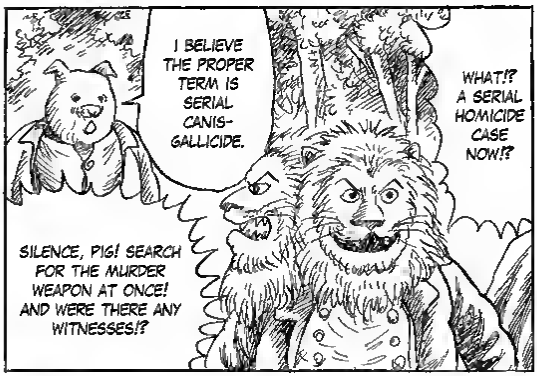

THAT'S ACTUALLY THE SUSPICIOUS MATTER I WISHED TO QUESTION THE ROOSTER ON
WHAT, DID THE HEN SWALLOW IT?
I'M AFRAID IT'S MISSING

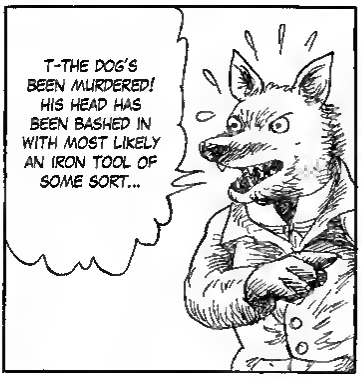
WHAT'S THAT TIED AROUND THE HEN'S NECK?
AHH! THAT'S THE RED SILK I GAVE AWAY!
WE CLEARLY NEED A MORE DETAILED EXAMINATION! SEND HER FOR AN AUTOPSY!
WHAT!? SO SHE DIDN'T DIE FROM CHOKING ON A WALNUT!?
IT ALMOST APPEARS AS IF THE DEATH WAS DUE TO STRANGULATION WITH THIS SILK
NOT ONLY THAT, MY CLIENT HAS TOLD ME THAT AFTER GIVING WATER TO THE ROOSTER, THE RED SILK WAS STOLEN BY SOMEONE.
BUT YOUR HONOUR, THERE'S NO WAY THE FOUNTAIN COULD HAVE WALKED ALL THE WAY OVER TO THE WALNUT GARDEN
IN ANY CASE, THAT RED SILK CLEARLY CASTS HEAVY SUSPICION ON THE FOUNTAIN! GET AN ARREST WARRANT AND BRING HIM IN!

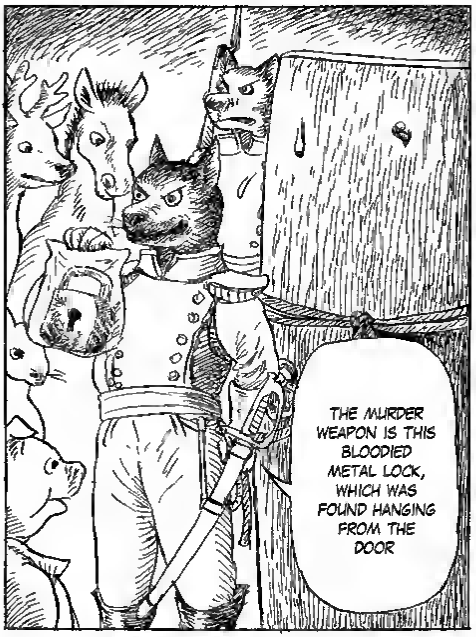
YOUR HONOUR, THE AUTOPSY REPORT IS IN
HAS THE DOG STILL NOT ARRIVED!?
YOU EXPECT ME TO BELIEVE THAT!? HE COULD HAVE HAD AN ACCOMPLICE!
THERE'S SOMETHING ABOUT THAT WALNUT THAT STILL DOESN'T MAKE SENSE FROM THE ROOSTER'S STORY THOUGH..
SEE THAT! THE VICTIM MUST HAVE DIED FROM STRANGULATION AFTER ALL! I CALL FOR THE IMMEDIATE ARREST OF THE FOUNTAIN!
WHAT DOES YOUR HONOUR THINK?
MANY SMALL WALNUT KERNELS WERE INDEED FOUND INSIDE THE VICTIM'S STOMACH, BUT THE CLAIMED PIECE OF WALNUT LARGE ENOUGH TO CHOKE THE VICTIM WAS NOWHERE TO BE FOUND IN THE STOMACH NOR THE GULLET.
YES, THE CHICKEN WAS QUITE PLUMP.
THE FAT IS SO JUICY!
MM, THIS IS DELECTABLE!
I CALL FOR A SHORT LUNCH RECESS FOR I'M TOO FAMISHED TO THINK CLEARLY!
SOUNDS GOOD, BRING IT OUT!
WILL ROAST CHICKEN BE FINE?

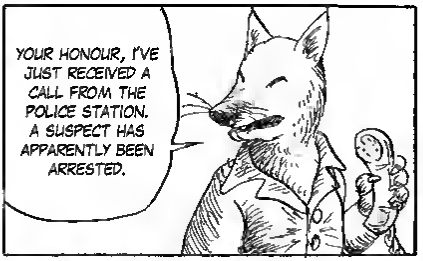

THEN WHERE IS THE DOG? WHY HAVE YOU NOT BROUGHT HIM YET!?
THIS IS THE OFFICER I SENT TO BRING THE DOG.
WHO'S HE?

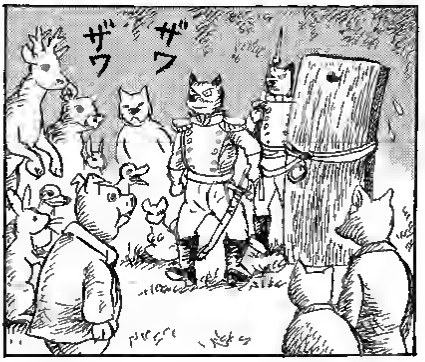

YOUR HONOUR!


I BELIEVE THE PROPER TERM IS SERIAL CANIS-GALLICIDE.
WHAT!? A SERIAL HOMICIDE CASE NOW!?
SILENCE, PIG! SEARCH FOR THE MURDER WEAPON AT ONCE! AND WERE THERE ANY WITNESSES!?


T-THE DOG'S BEEN MURDERED! HIS HEAD HAS BEEN BASHED IN WITH MOST LIKELY AN IRON TOOL OF SOME SORT...


THE MURDER WEAPON IS THIS BLOODIED METAL LOCK, WHICH WAS FOUND HANGING FROM THE DOOR


YOUR HONOUR, I'VE JUST RECEIVED A CALL FROM THE POLICE STATION. A SUSPECT HAS APPARENTLY BEEN ARRESTED.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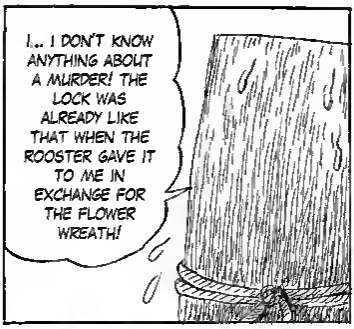
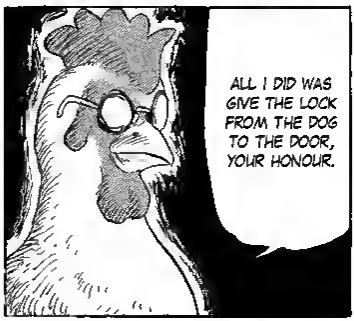
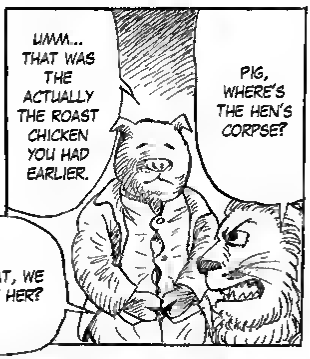
ORDER! ORDER IN THE COURT! AN EXAMINATION OF THE CRIME SCENE IS IN NEED BEFORE WE CAN REACH A CLEAR DECISION!
EVERYONE, PLEASE LISTEN... THERE'S SOMETHING VERY IMPORTANT ABOUT THE WALNUT THAT I BELIEVE WE'VE ALL OVERLOOKED
YES, ALL WE NEED IS HIS CONFESSION.
THE DOOR'S GUILT IS CLEAR! AND I'M WILLING TO SAY HE MIGHT HAVE ALSO HAD A HAND... NAY, A DOORKNOB IN THE HEN'S MURDER!

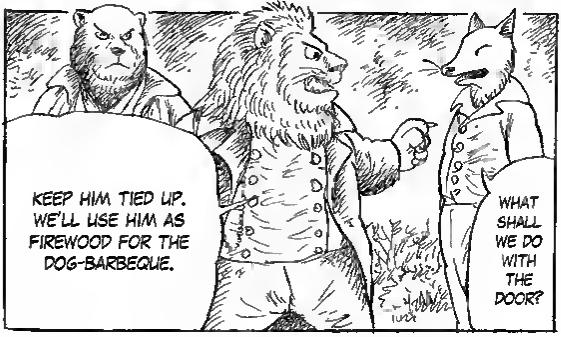

I... I DON'T KNOW ANYTHING ABOUT A MURDER! THE LOCK WAS ALREADY LIKE THAT WHEN THE ROOSTER GAVE IT TO ME IN EXCHANGE FOR THE FLOWER WREATH!

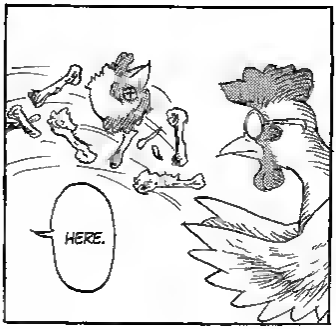

ALL I DID WAS GIVE THE LOCK FROM THE DOG TO THE DOOR, YOUR HONOUR.

FINE, GIVE THOSE BACK AT LEAST.
YES, AND HER INNARDS WERE EATEN BY THE VULTURE MEDICAL EXAMINER EARLIER SO ONLY THE HEN'S BONES AND HEAD NOW REMAIN.

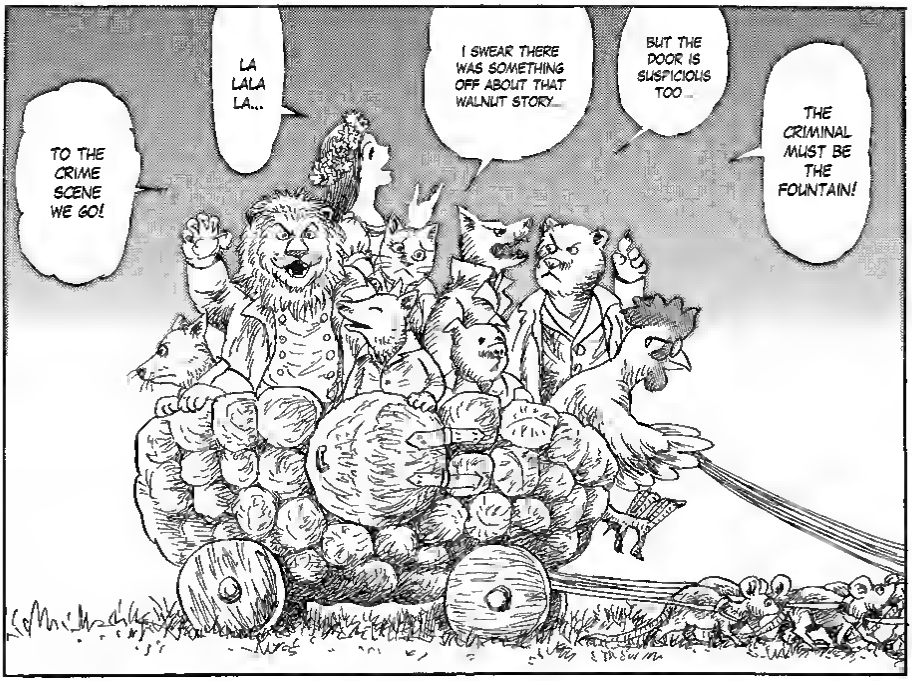

WHAT, WE ATE HER?
UMM... THAT WAS THE ACTUALLY THE ROAST CHICKEN YOU HAD EARLIER.
PIG, WHERE'S THE HEN'S CORPSE?

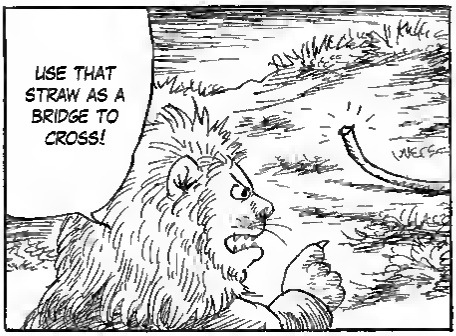
YOUR HONOUR, IF IT'S NOT TOO MUCH TROUBLE, I WOULD LIKE TO BURY MY POOR WIFE NOW...

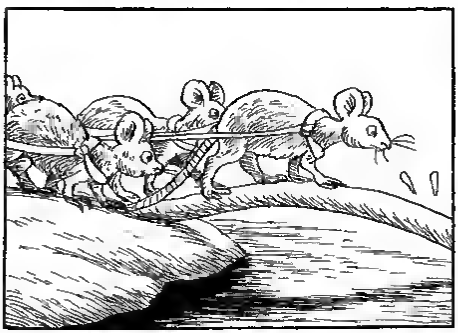

KEEP HIM TIED UP. WE'LL USE HIM AS FIREWOOD FOR THE DOG-BARBEQUE.
WHAT SHALL WE DO WITH THE DOOR?


HERE.

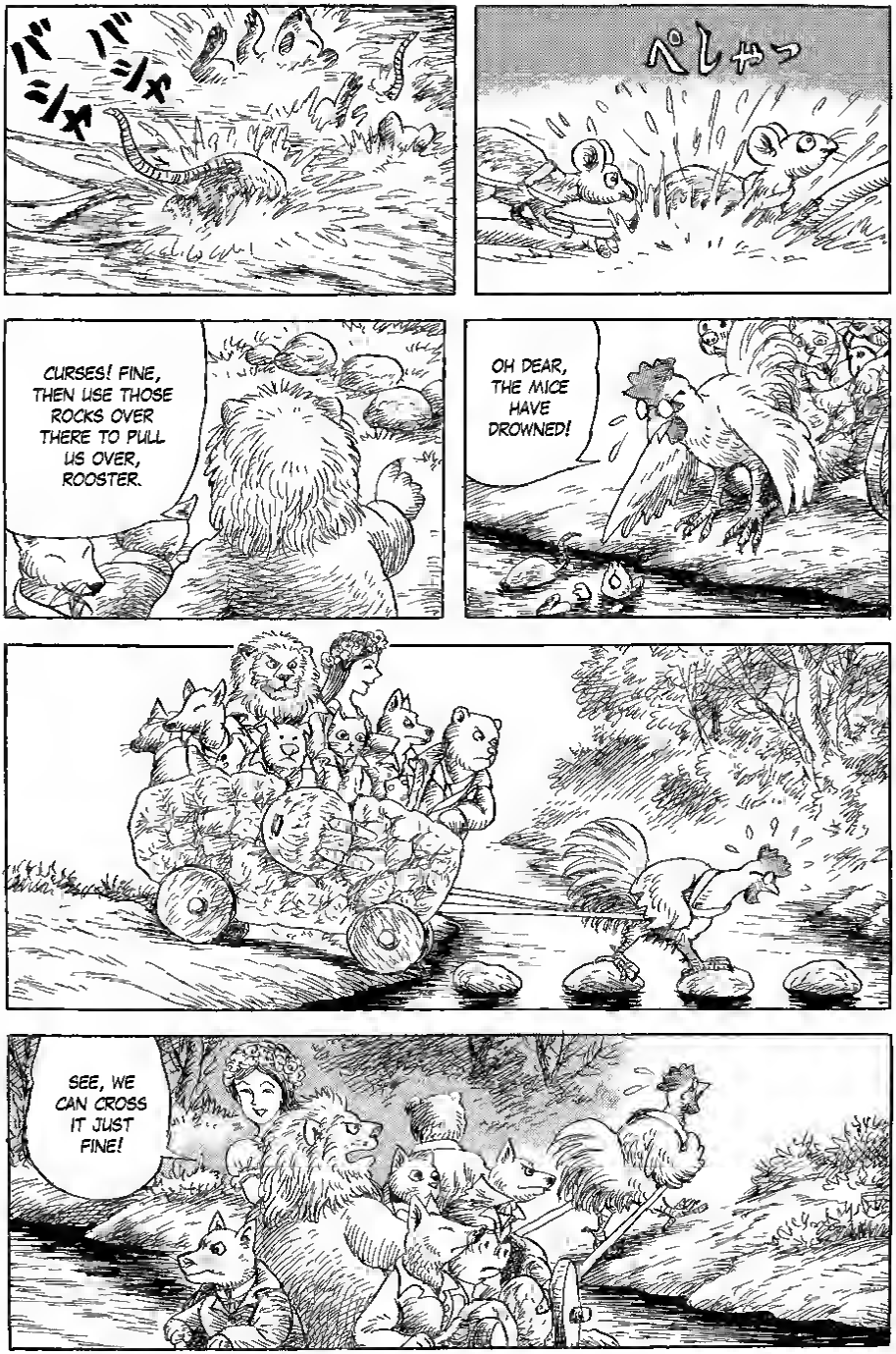
OHH, WHAT AN EXQUISITELY CRAFTED CARRIAGE!
IF NONE OF YOU MIND, YOU ARE FREE TO USE MY CAR
BRING OUT THE CARRIAGE NOW! WE'RE OFF TO THE CRIME SCENE!
WE DON'T HAVE A CARRIAGE, YOUR HONOUR.
SPEAKING OF OTAKU, AKIBA IS QUITE A SIGHT!
LOOK AT THIS FANCY DOOR!
HAHAHA, LOOKS LIKE WE'VE GOT A WALNUT OTAKU HERE.
YES, I MADE IT MYSELF FROM WALNUT SHELLS. IT'S SORT OF MY HOBBY, YOU SEE...
I'M QUITE SKILLED AT WALNUT SHELL AND KERNEL-CRAFTS, YOU SEE. THESE ARE SOME FIGURES I'VE MADE.
YOU KNOW, I ACTUALLY HAVE MY AKIHABARA RENTAL SHOWCASE WITH ME I USUALLY AUCTION OFF MY HAND-CRAFTED ITEMS OFF THE INTERNET.
VERY MOE, I SAY!
WHATEVER, LET'S MOVE ALREADY!
HA, LOOK AT THIS WALNUT FETISHIST!


LA LALA LA...
I SWEAR THERE WAS SOMETHING OFF ABOUT THAT WALNUT STORY...
BUT THE DOOR IS SUSPICIOUS TOO...
THE CRIMINAL MUST BE THE FOUNTAIN!
TO THE CRIME SCENE WE GO!


USE THAT STRAW AS A BRIDGE TO CROSS!



IT'S BUT A MERE STREAM.
YOUR HONOUR, IT'S A RIVER.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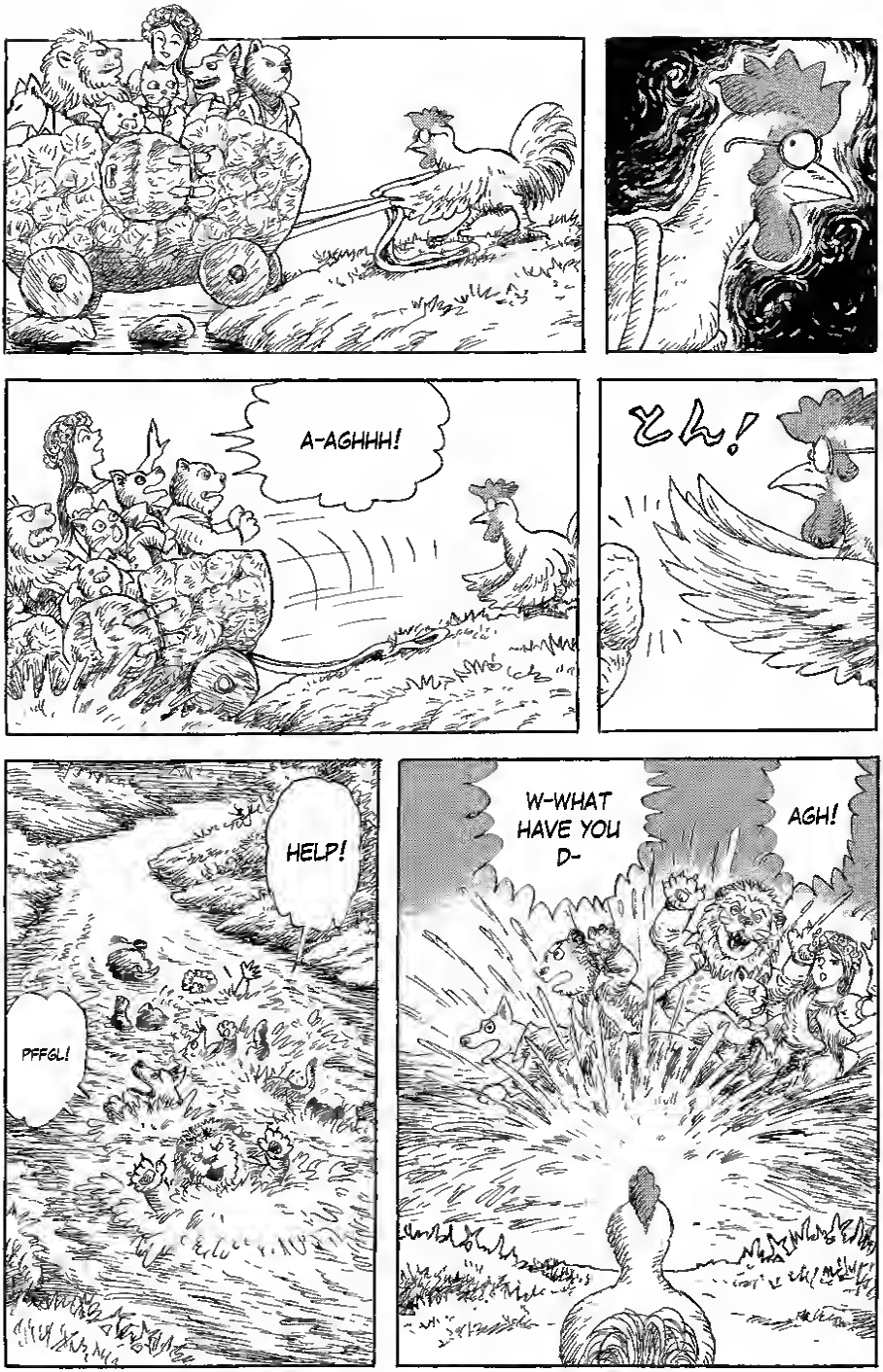
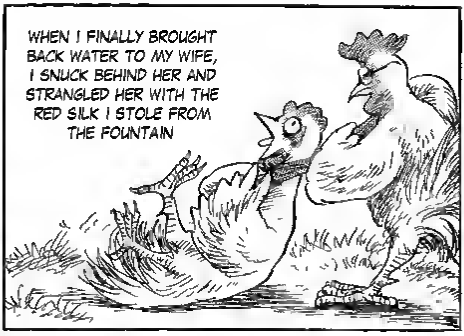
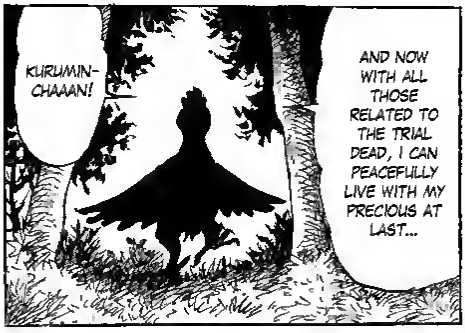
CURSES! FINE, THEN USE THOSE ROCKS OVER THERE TO PULL US OVER, ROOSTER.
OH DEAR, THE MICE HAVE DROWNED!
SEE, WE CAN CROSS IT JUST FINE!


A-AGHHH!
とん!
HELP!
PFFGL!
W-WHAT HAVE YOU D-
AGH!

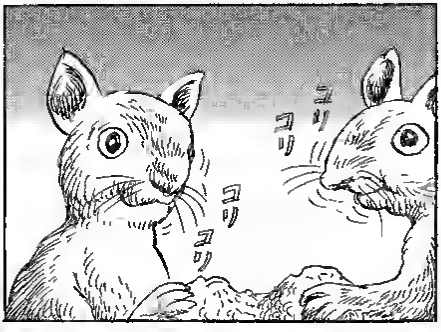
I MADE MY DECISION THE MOMENT I LAID EYES ON THAT BEAUTIFUL WALNUT.
AS IF I'D JUST HAND OVER MY PRECIOUS WALNUT AS "EVIDENCE"...
HEH HEH... WHAT A FARCE OF A TRIAL THAT WAS.
BUT WHILE I WAS USING A PART OF THE WALNUT SHELL TO FINISH THE DOOR OF MY WALNUT CARRIAGE, THAT FAT WIFE OF MINE JUST HAD TO INTERFERE...
AND I WOULD NAME HER KURUMIN-CHAN!
I DECIDED THAT I WOULD CARVE MY MASTERPIECE FROM THIS WALNUT,
AND I HAD TO KILL THAT STUPID DOG WHO ALSO TRIED TO EAT MY PRECIOUS...
AFTER DISLODGING IT FROM HER THROAT, THE FIRST THING I DID WAS HIDE IT IN A SAFE PLACE.
HOW DARE SHE SWALLOW MY KURUMIN-CHAN!

*KURUMI = WALNUT (JAPANESE)


WHEN I FINALLY BROUGHT BACK WATER TO MY WIFE, I SNUCK BEHIND HER AND STRANGLED HER WITH THE RED SILK I STOLE FROM THE FOUNTAIN


KURUMIN-CHAAAN!
AND NOW WITH ALL THOSE RELATED TO THE TRIAL DEAD, I CAN PEACEFULLY LIVE WITH MY PRECIOUS AT LAST...

YOU PESTS!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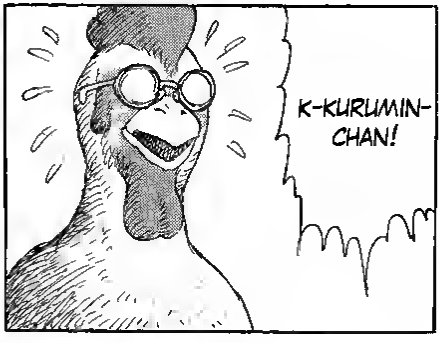
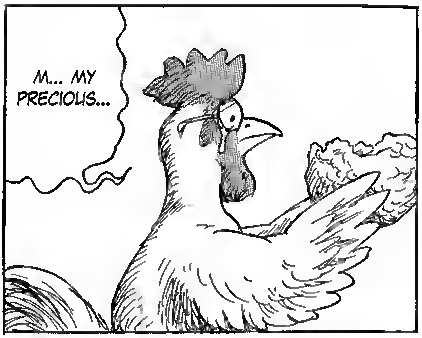
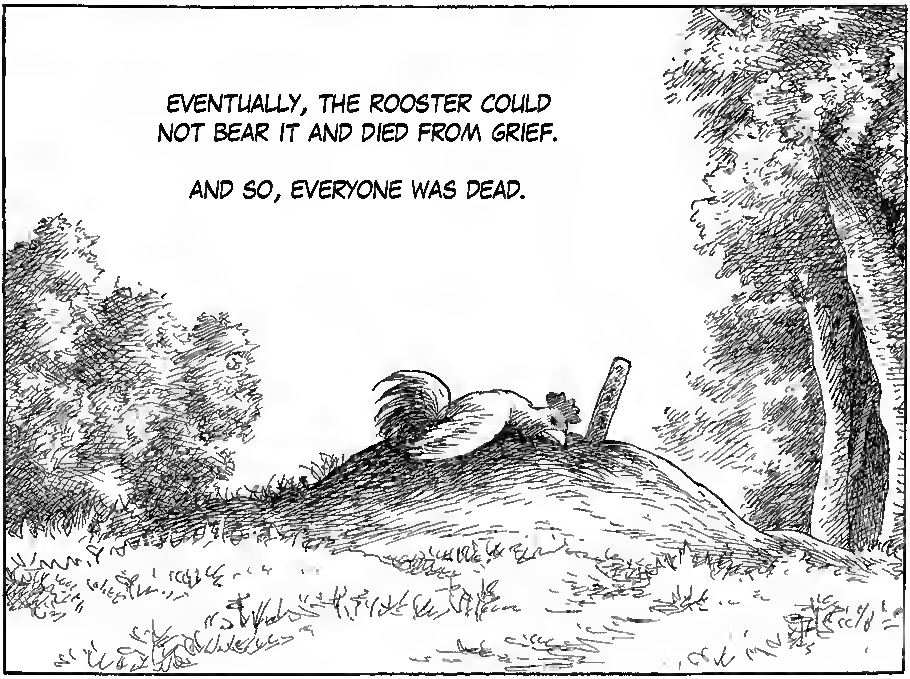
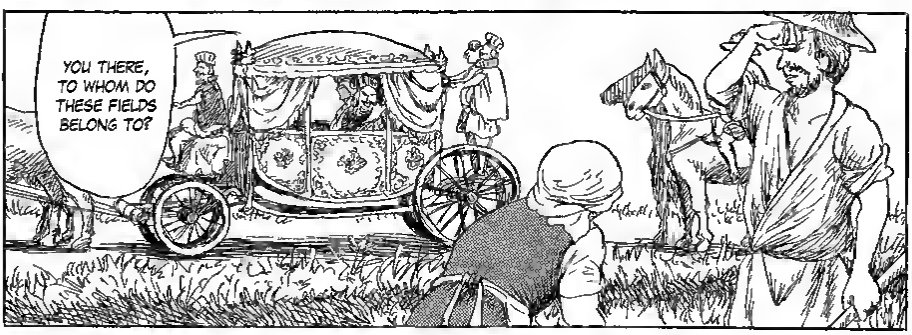

K-KURUMIN-CHAN!

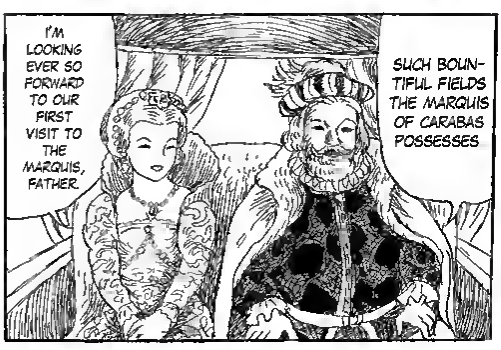
THE ROOSTER BURIED THE REMAINS OF THE WALNUT KERNEL AND GRIEVED IN FRONT OF IT.


M... MY PRECIOUS...

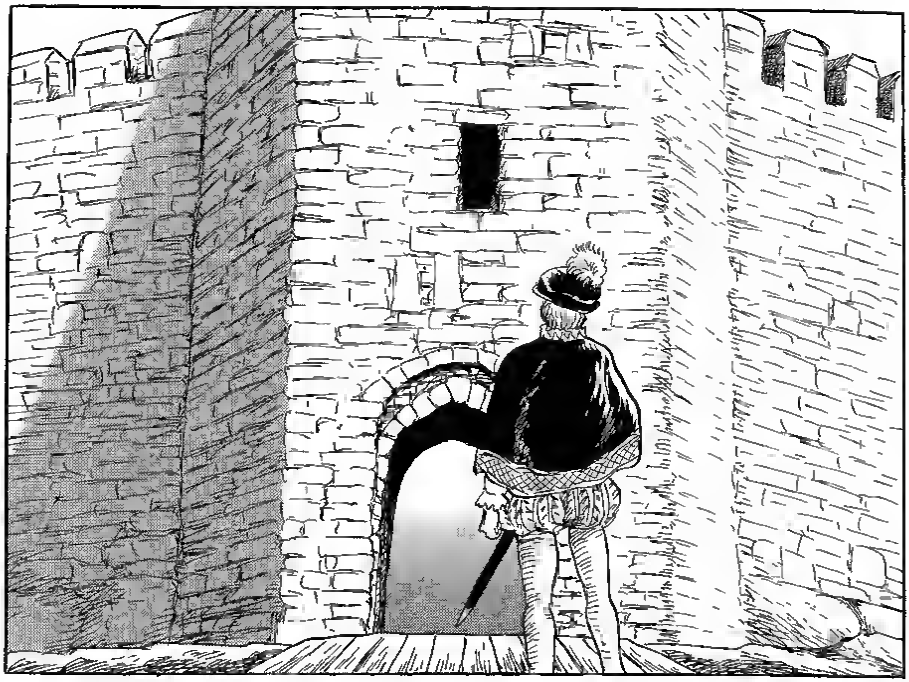

EVENTUALLY, THE ROOSTER COULD NOT BEAR IT AND DIED FROM GRIEF.
AND SO, EVERYONE WAS DEAD.

Marquis of Carabas

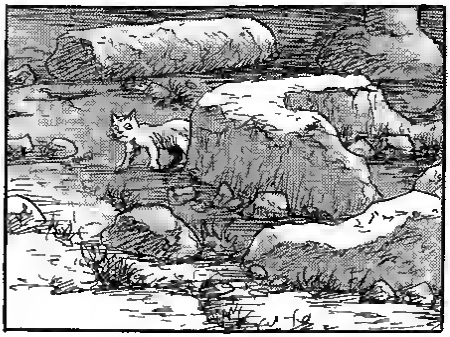

YOU THERE, TO WHOM DO THESE FIELDS BELONG TO?

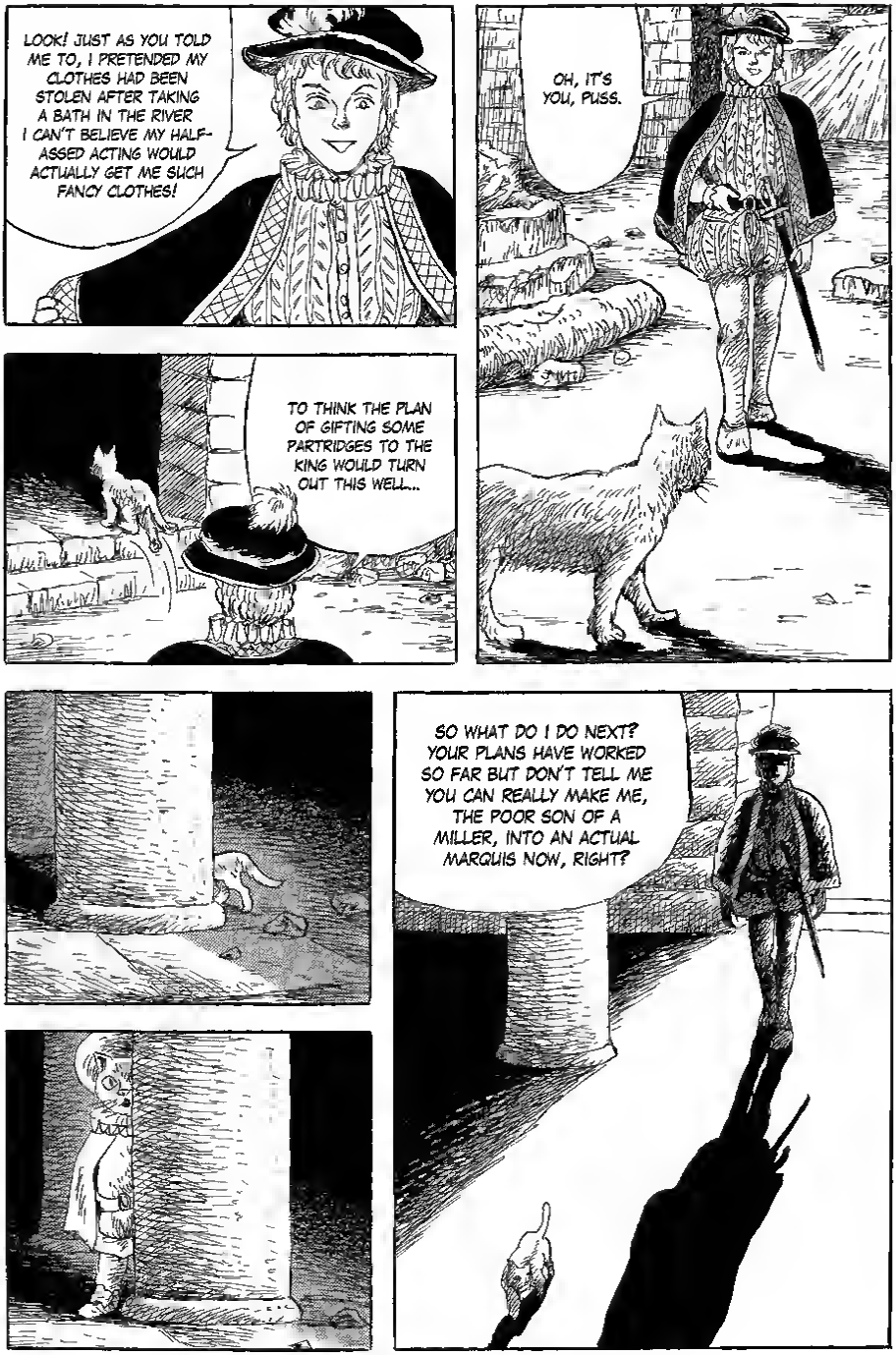

I'M LOOKING EVER SO FORWARD TO OUR FIRST VISIT TO THE MARQUIS, FATHER.
SUCH BOUNTIFUL FIELDS THE MARQUIS OF CARABAS POSSESSES

THE MARQUIS OF CARABAS, GOOD SIR.

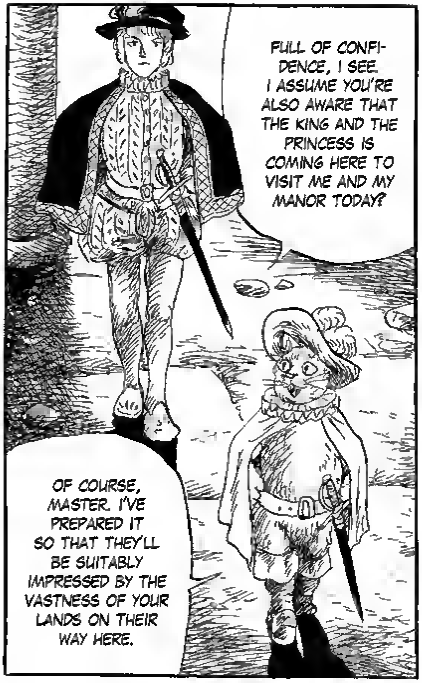


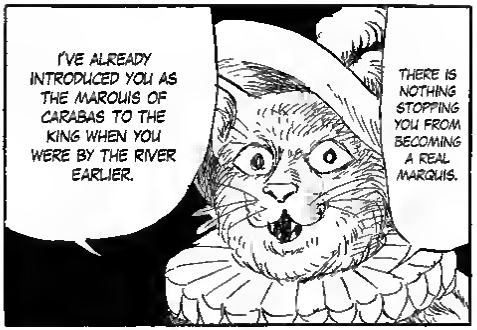
SO THIS IS THE MARQUIS OF CARABAS' CASTLE? IT'S COMPLETELY ABANDONED..

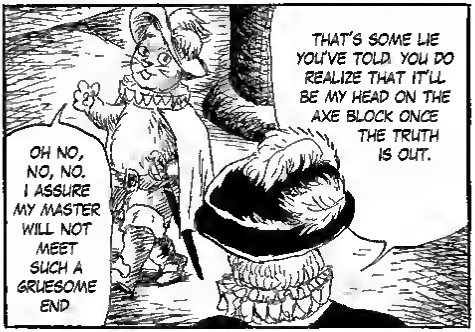


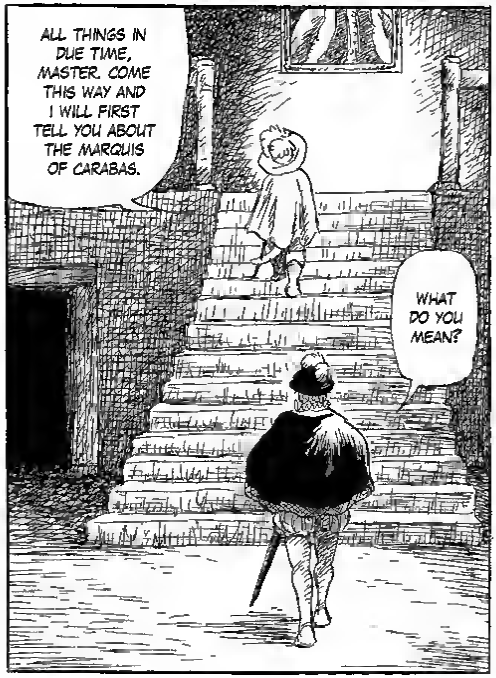

LOOK! JUST AS YOU TOLD ME TO, I PRETENDED MY CLOTHES HAD BEEN STOLEN AFTER TAKING A BATH IN THE RIVER I CAN'T BELIEVE MY HALF-ASSED ACTING WOULD ACTUALLY GET ME SUCH FANCY CLOTHES!
OH, IT'S YOU, PUSS.
TO THINK THE PLAN OF GIFTING SOME PARTRIDGES TO THE KING WOULD TURN OUT THIS WELL...
SO WHAT DO I DO NEXT? YOUR PLANS HAVE WORKED SO FAR BUT DON'T TELL ME YOU CAN REALLY MAKE ME, THE POOR SON OF A MILLER, INTO AN ACTUAL MARQUIS NOW, RIGHT?

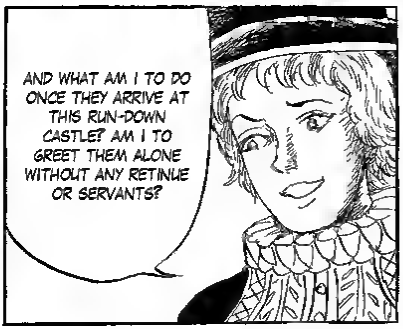
WORRY NOT, MASTER.

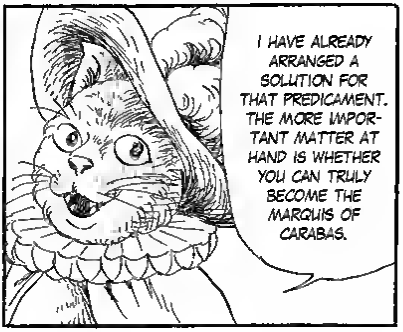

FULL OF CONFIDENCE, I SEE. I ASSUME YOU'RE ALSO AWARE THAT THE KING AND THE PRINCESS IS COMING HERE TO VISIT ME AND MY MANOR TODAY?
OF COURSE, MASTER. I'VE PREPARED IT SO THAT THEY'LL BE SUITABLY IMPRESSED BY THE VASTNESS OF YOUR LANDS ON THEIR WAY HERE.

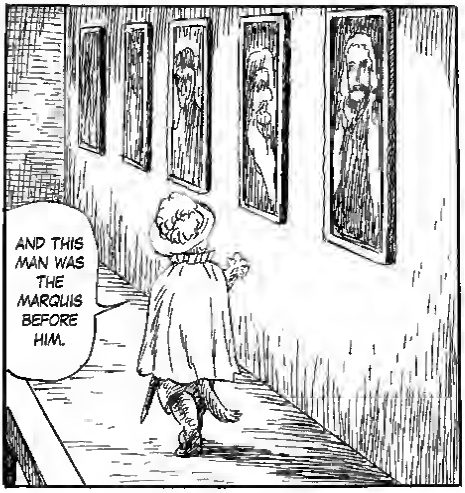

I'VE ALREADY INTRODUCED YOU AS THE MARQUIS OF CARABAS TO THE KING WHEN YOU WERE BY THE RIVER EARLIER.
THERE IS NOTHING STOPPING YOU FROM BECOMING A REAL MARQUIS.

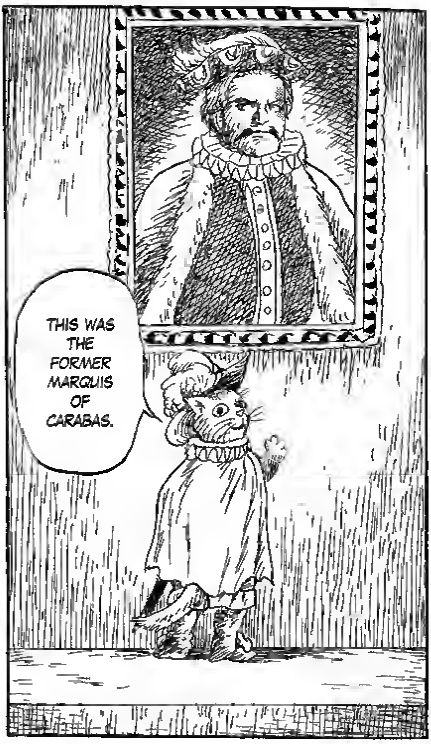

OH NO, NO, NO. I ASSURE MY MASTER WILL NOT MEET SUCH A GRUESOME END
THAT'S SOME LIE YOU'VE TOLD. YOU DO REALIZE THAT IT'LL BE MY HEAD ON THE AXE BLOCK ONCE THE TRUTH IS OUT.

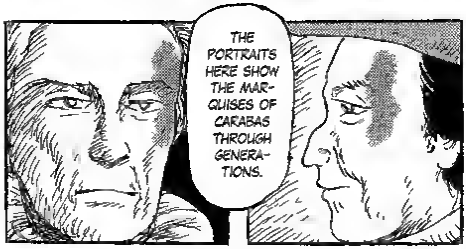

ALL THINGS IN DUE TIME, MASTER. COME THIS WAY AND I WILL FIRST TELL YOU ABOUT THE MARQUIS OF CARABAS.
WHAT DO YOU MEAN?


AND WHAT AM I TO DO ONCE THEY ARRIVE AT THIS RUN-DOWN CASTLE? AM I TO GREET THEM ALONE WITHOUT ANY RETINUE OR SERVANTS?


I HAVE ALREADY ARRANGED A SOLUTION FOR THAT PREDICAMENT. THE MORE IMPORTANT MATTER AT HAND IS WHETHER YOU CAN TRULY BECOME THE MARQUIS OF CARABAS.


AND THIS MAN WAS THE MARQUIS BEFORE HIM.


THIS WAS THE FORMER MARQUIS OF CARABAS.


THE PORTRAITS HERE SHOW THE MARQUISES OF CARABAS THROUGH GENERATIONS.

YES, A CONGENITAL MARK PASSED THROUGH THE BLOODLINE ALMOST A HERALDIC EMBLEM OF SORTS, IF YOU WILL.
THEY... ALL HAVE THE SAME MARK ON THEIR FACE...

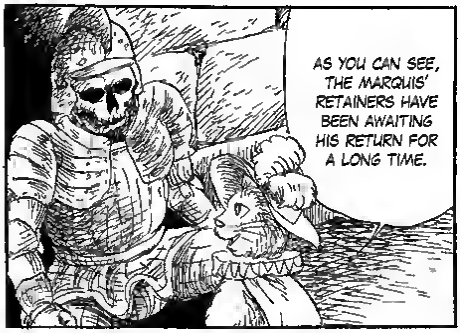
AND THIS HERE WAS THE VERY FIRST MARQUIS OF CARABAS.

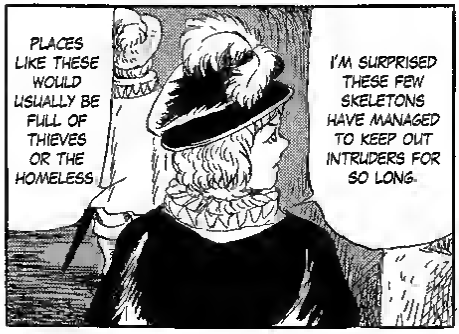
YOU SURE DO TALK POMPOUSLY FOR A MERE CAT. SO WHAT SHOULD I DO SINCE I DON'T HAVE THAT BIRTHMARK?

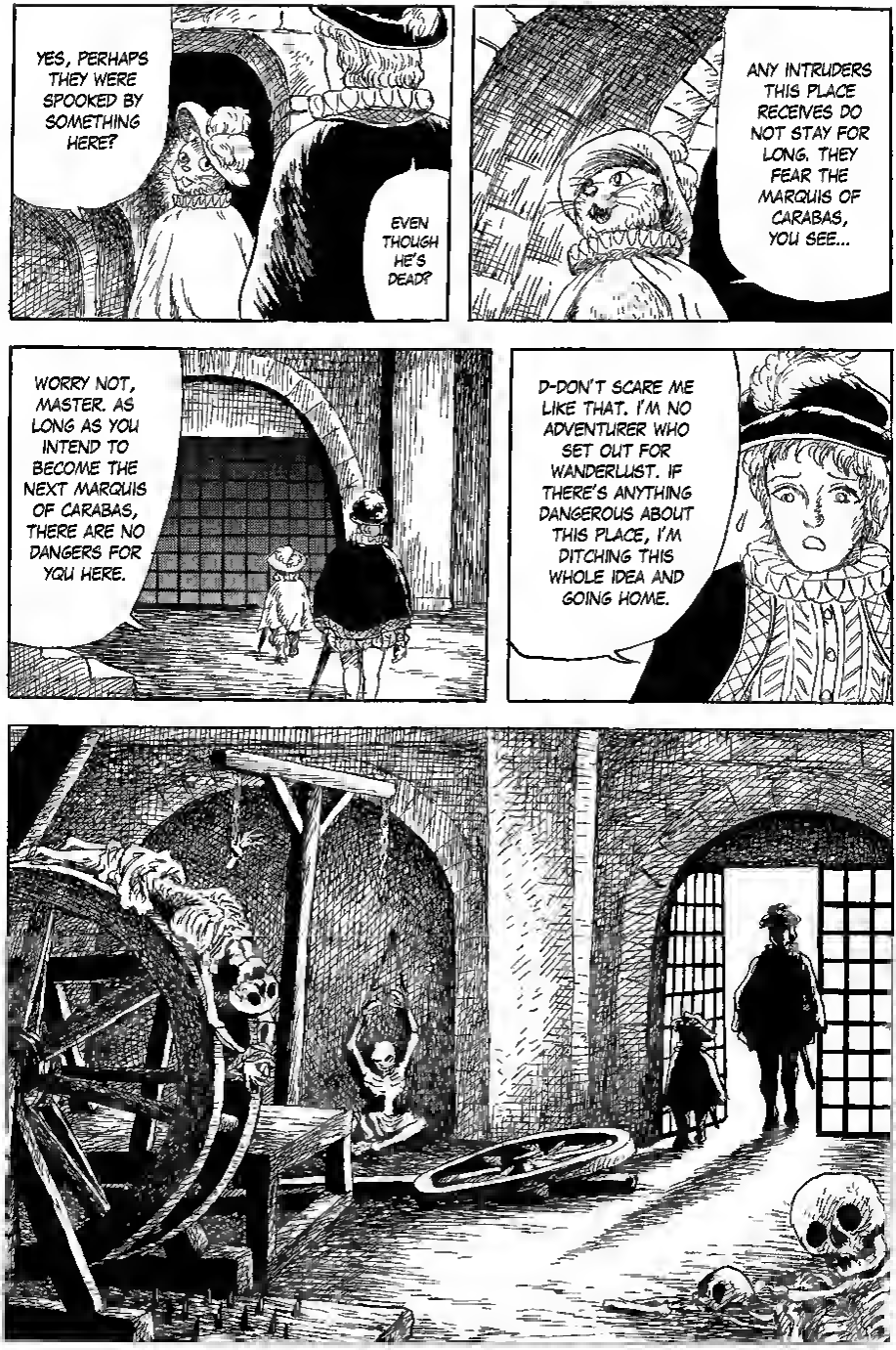
OF COURSE NOT. YOU'RE THE ONE WHO DECIDED TO GIVE ME THAT TITLE AND LEAD ME TO THIS ABANDONED CASTLE THAT I'VE NEVER EVEN SEEN BEFORE.
MORE IMPORTANTLY, ARE YOU AWARE WHAT KIND OF FIGURE THE MARQUIS OF CARABAS IS?
NO, THAT WILL NOT BE NECESSARY.
SHOULD I TRY TO DRAW ONE ON?
AS YOU CAN SEE FOR YOURSELF, THE MARQUIS OF CARABAS WAS ONE WHO OWNED A LARGE, RICH LAND AND LIVED IN A GRAND CASTLE.
OH, I WOULD NEVER LIE, MASTER.
TO BE HONEST, I DIDN'T EVEN THINK THERE EVER WAS A REAL MARQUIS OF CARABAS UNTIL NOW. I ASSUMED IT WAS PART OF THE LIE.
THIS CASTLE COULD USE SOME WORK BUT IT'S STILL MORE OR LESS LIVABLE. I'M SURPRISED THAT IT WAS JUST ABANDONED ENTIRELY... DID HE NOT HAVE A SUCCESSOR?
YES, HE IS NOT PRESENT AT THE MOMENT. THAT IS WHY THIS CASTLE IS EMPTY.
WAS? SO HE'S GONE NOW? DID HE DIE?
JUST LEAVE IT TO ME, MASTER. NOW LET US HEAD INSIDE THE TOWER
EASIER SAID THAN DONE.
YES, THAT IS WHY YOU SHOULD BECOME THE NEXT MARQUIS OF CARABAS AND INHERIT THIS CASTLE AND ITS LANDS.

TO WHOM DO THESE FIELDS BELONG TO?
THE MARQUIS OF CARABAS, GOOD SIR.
THIS MARQUIS OF CARABAS HAS A REMARKABLY LARGE MANOR
YES, AND HE'S REMARKABLY CHARMING AS WELL, FATHER.
OH, DOES MY DAUGHTER FANCY THE MARQUIS?
OH, FATHER, IT'S STILL TOO SOON FOR SUCH TALK...
I MUST ADMIT THAT MY FIRST IMPRESSION OF HIM WAS A COMMON RABBLE, MAYBE A MILLER, WHEN I SAW HIM BY THE RIVER WITHOUT HIS CLOTHES
OH, HOW COULD YOU SAY SUCH A TERRIBLE THING...

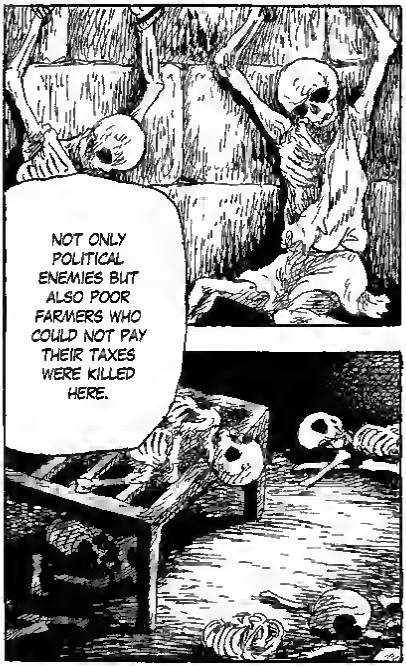
A MERE SKELETON NOTHING TO FEAR, MASTER.

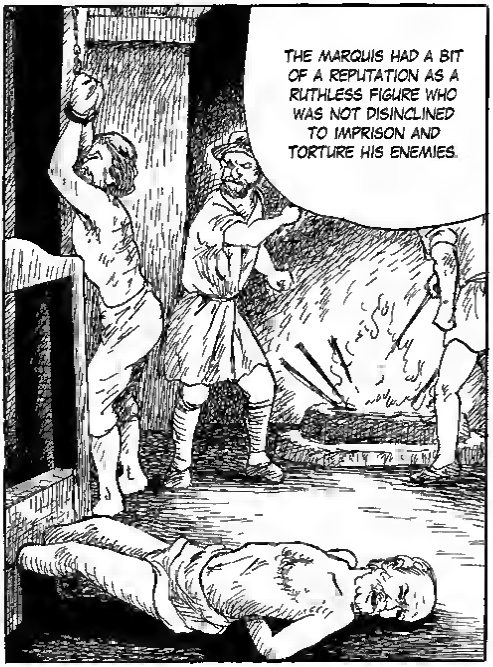

AS YOU CAN SEE, THE MARQUIS' RETAINERS HAVE BEEN AWAITING HIS RETURN FOR A LONG TIME.

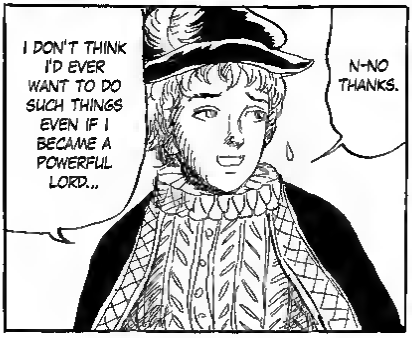

PLACES LIKE THESE WOULD USUALLY BE FULL OF THIEVES OR THE HOMELESS
I'M SURPRISED THESE FEW SKELETONS HAVE MANAGED TO KEEP OUT INTRUDERS FOR SO LONG.

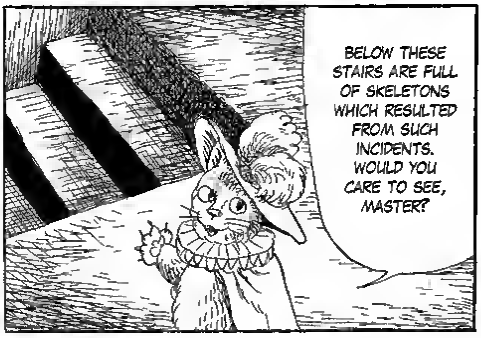

YES, PERHAPS THEY WERE SPOOKED BY SOMETHING HERE?
EVEN THOUGH HE'S DEAD?
ANY INTRUDERS THIS PLACE RECEIVES DO NOT STAY FOR LONG. THEY FEAR THE MARQUIS OF CARABAS, YOU SEE...
WORRY NOT, MASTER. AS LONG AS YOU INTEND TO BECOME THE NEXT MARQUIS OF CARABAS, THERE ARE NO DANGERS FOR YOU HERE.
D-DON'T SCARE ME LIKE THAT. I'M NO ADVENTURER WHO SET OUT FOR WANDERLUST. IF THERE'S ANYTHING DANGEROUS ABOUT THIS PLACE, I'M DITCHING THIS WHOLE IDEA AND GOING HOME.

THE DUNGEON, MASTER PRISONERS WOULD BE TORTURED AND HELD CAPTIVE HERE.
WHAT IS THIS?

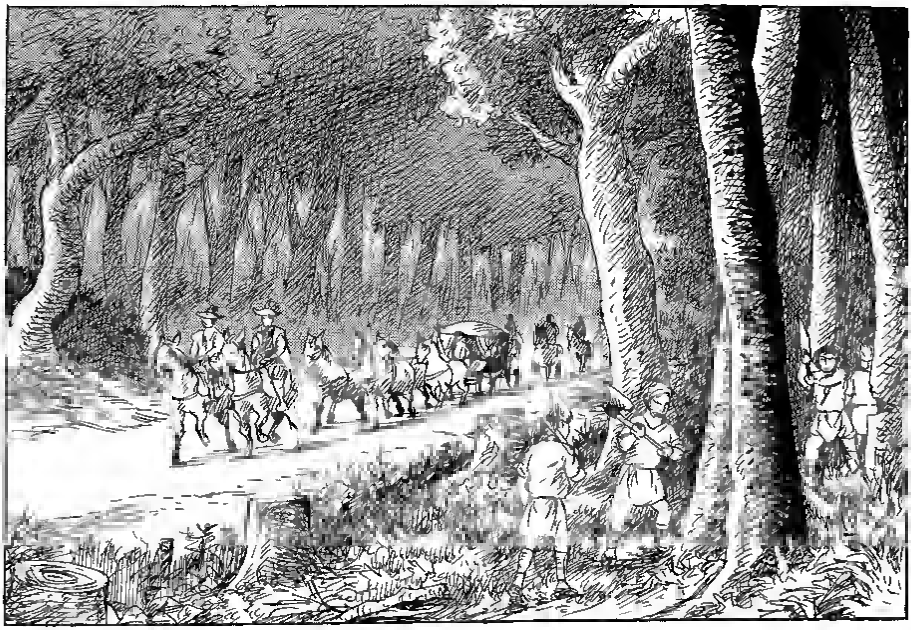

NOT ONLY POLITICAL ENEMIES BUT ALSO POOR FARMERS WHO COULD NOT PAY THEIR TAXES WERE KILLED HERE.


THE MARQUIS HAD A BIT OF A REPUTATION AS A RUTHLESS FIGURE WHO WAS NOT DISINCLINED TO IMPRISON AND TORTURE HIS ENEMIES.

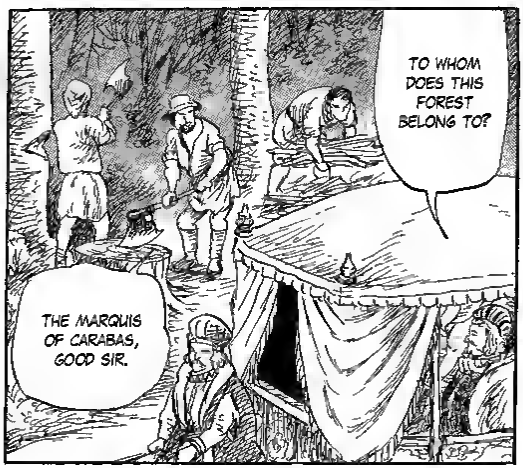

I DON'T THINK I'D EVER WANT TO DO SUCH THINGS EVEN IF I BECAME A POWERFUL LORD...
N-NO THANKS.

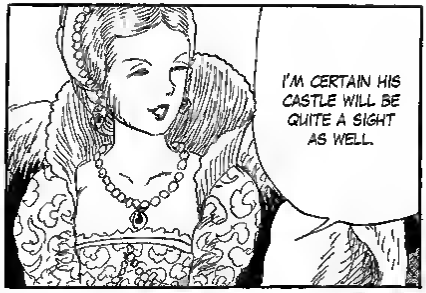

BELOW THESE STAIRS ARE FULL OF SKELETONS WHICH RESULTED FROM SUCH INCIDENTS. WOULD YOU CARE TO SEE, MASTER?

BUT YOU ARE FREE TO DO AS YOU WISH ONCE YOU BECOME THE MARQUIS OF CARABAS..
MY MASTER MAY FIND IT HARD TO COLLECT TAXES FROM ALL THE PEOPLE WHO LIVE ON HIS LANDS WITHOUT RESORTING TO SUCH HEAVY-HANDED MEASURES AT TIMES...

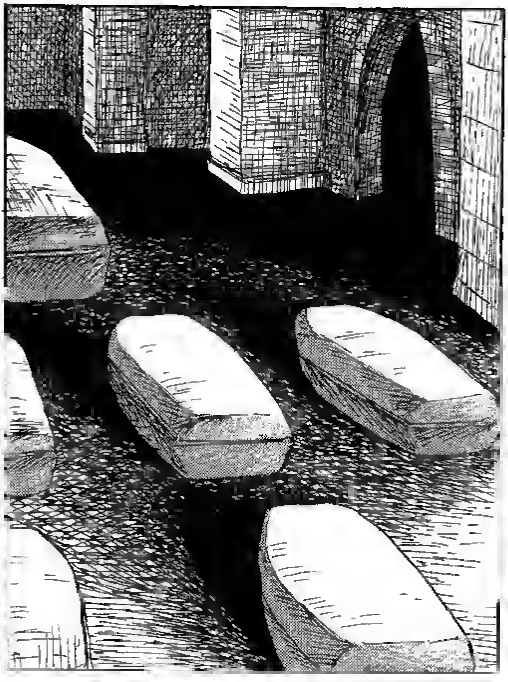


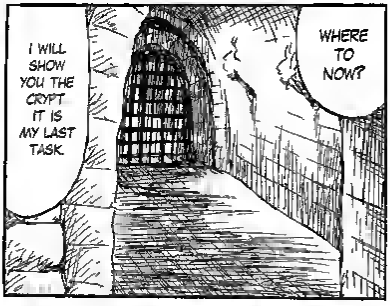
WHAT A VAST FOREST THE MARQUIS OF CARABAS ALSO HAS! HE MUST HAVE NO DIFFICULTIES IN GOING ON GRAND HUNTS.

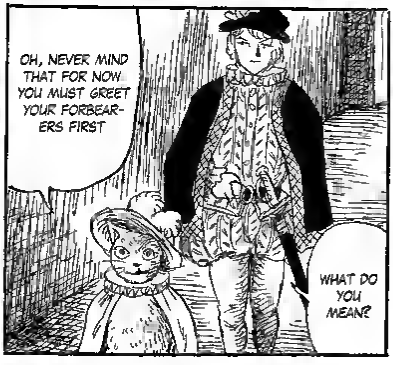

TO WHOM DOES THIS FOREST BELONG TO?
THE MARQUIS OF CARABAS, GOOD SIR.


I'M CERTAIN HIS CASTLE WILL BE QUITE A SIGHT AS WELL.

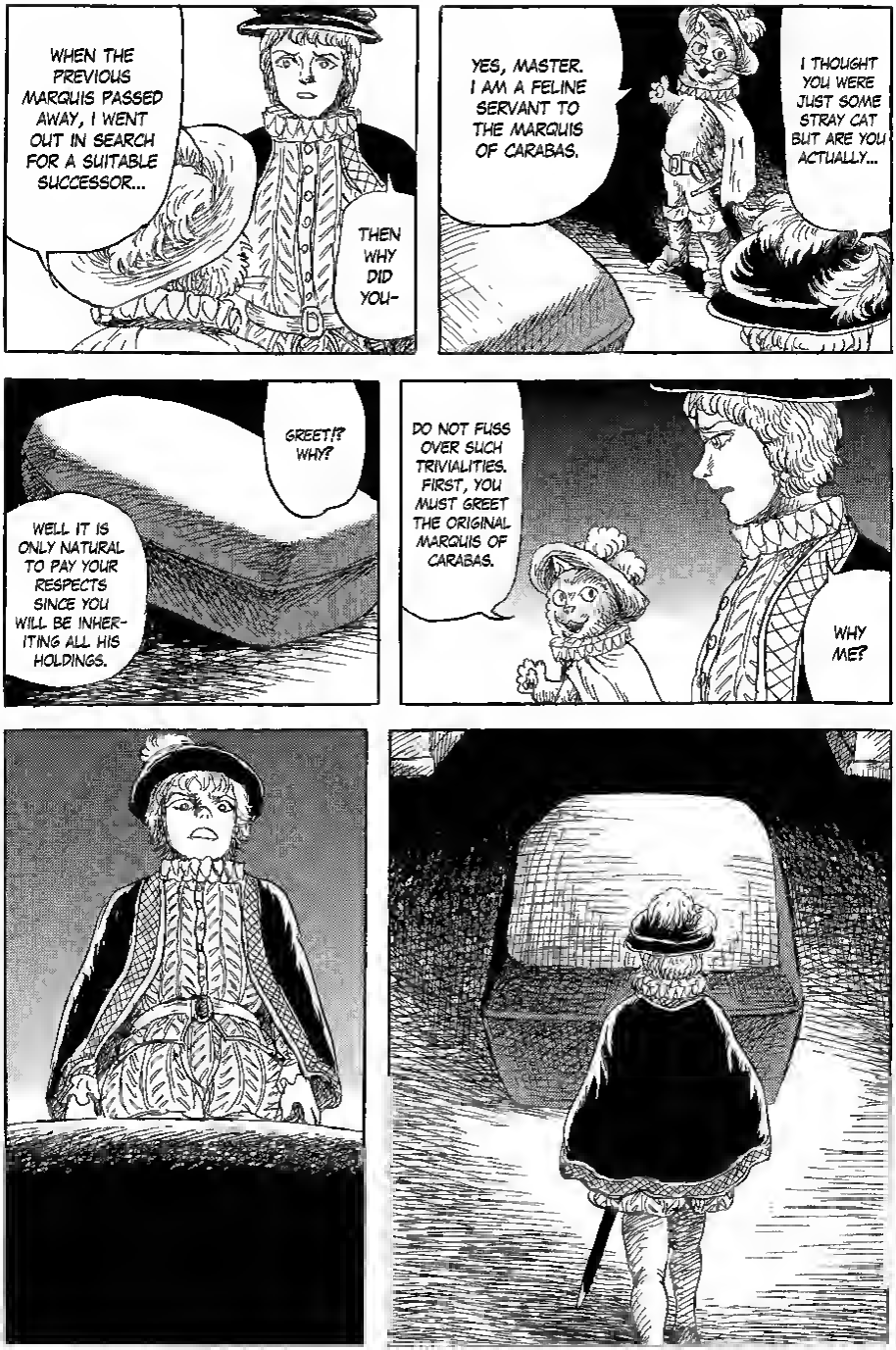
OH, YOU AND YOUR JESTS FATHER...
I DO BELIEVE IT IS NOT THE CASTLE, BUT RATHER THE MARQUIS HIMSELF WHO'LL BE QUITE THE ANTICIPATED SIGHT TO YOU, MY DAUGHTER.

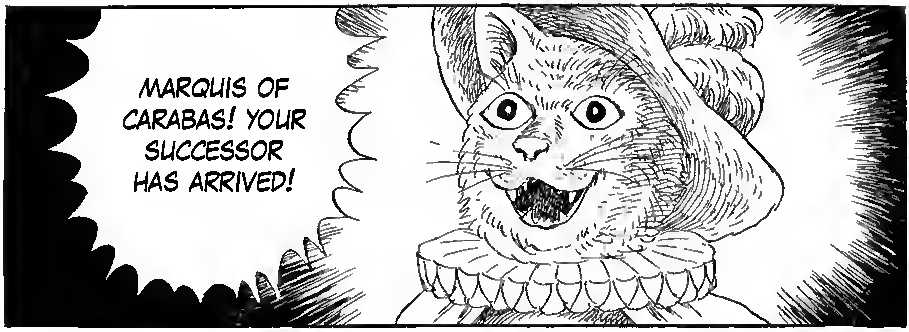


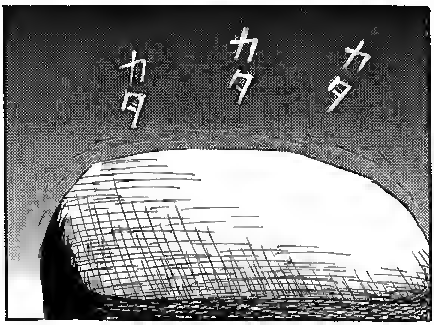

I WILL SHOW YOU THE CRYPT IT IS MY LAST TASK.
WHERE TO NOW?


OH, NEVER MIND THAT FOR NOW. YOU MUST GREET YOUR FORBEAR-ERS FIRST
WHAT DO YOU MEAN?

THIS IS YOUR PREDECESSOR, AND THAT IS THE PREDECESSOR BEFORE HIM.
THESE COFFINS HOLD THE CORPSES OF ALL THE MARQUISES OF CARABAS.
YOU SURE DO KNOW A LOT ABOUT THE MARQUISES OF CARABAS.
THANK YOU MASTER
AND THE ONE FARTHEST BACK INSIDE IS THE VERY FIRST MARQUIS OF CARABAS.
HOW DO YOU KNOW SO MUCH ANYWAYS? AREN'T YOU JUST A MILLER'S CAT?
.....
OH WAIT, THAT'S NOT QUITE RIGHT. YOU ONLY WANDERED IN TO OUR MILL JUST A YEAR BEFORE MY FATHER'S PASSING...


WHEN THE PREVIOUS MARQUIS PASSED AWAY, I WENT OUT IN SEARCH FOR A SUITABLE SUCCESSOR...
THEN WHY DID YOU-
YES, MASTER. I AM A FELINE SERVANT TO THE MARQUIS OF CARABAS.
I THOUGHT YOU WERE JUST SOME STRAY CAT BUT ARE YOU ACTUALLY...
GREET!? WHY?
WELL IT IS ONLY NATURAL TO PAY YOUR RESPECTS SINCE YOU WILL BE INHERITING ALL HIS HOLDINGS.
DO NOT FUSS OVER SUCH TRIVIALITIES. FIRST, YOU MUST GREET THE ORIGINAL MARQUIS OF CARABAS.
WHY ME?


MARQUIS OF CARABAS! YOUR SUCCESSOR HAS ARRIVED!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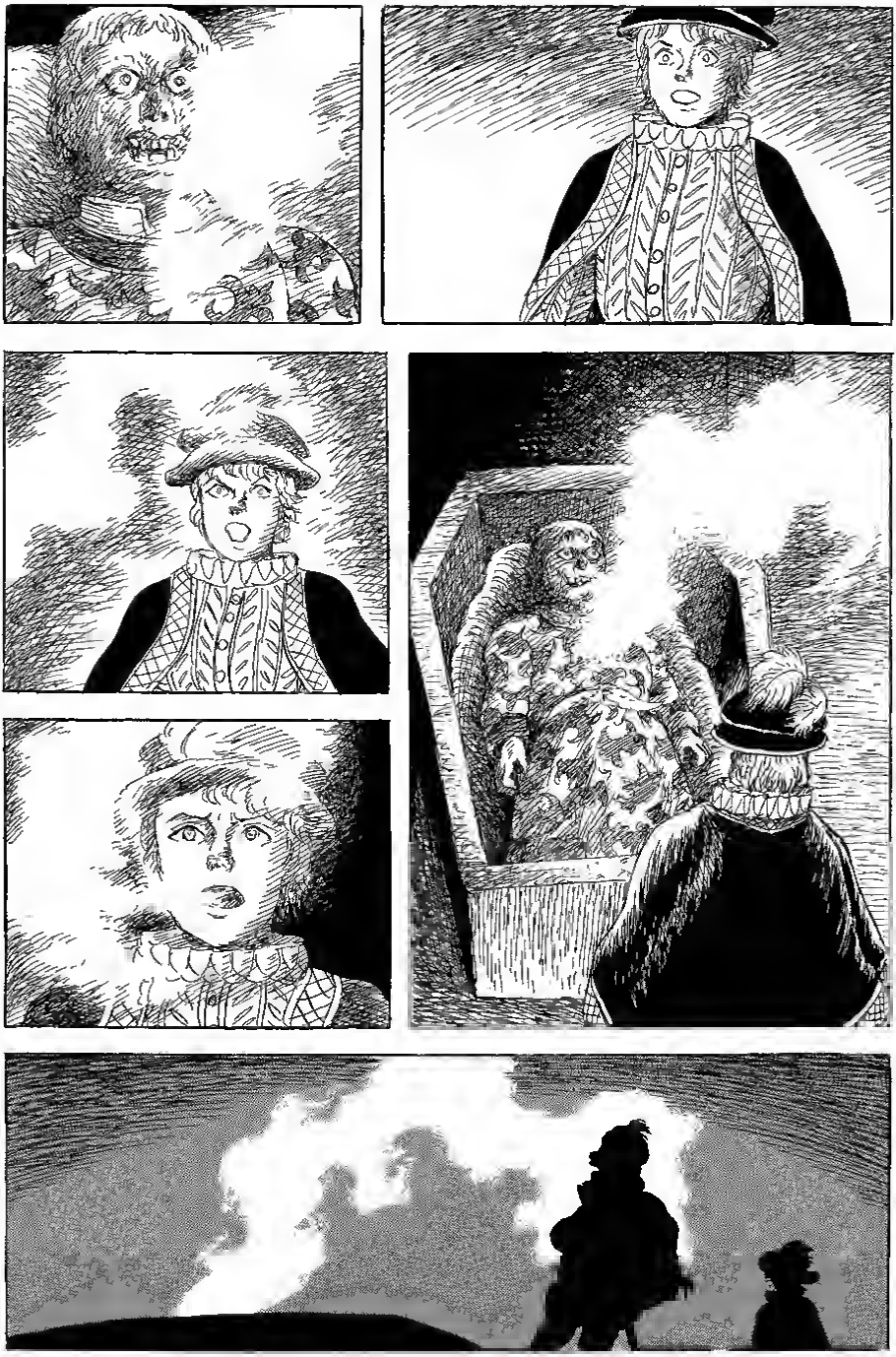

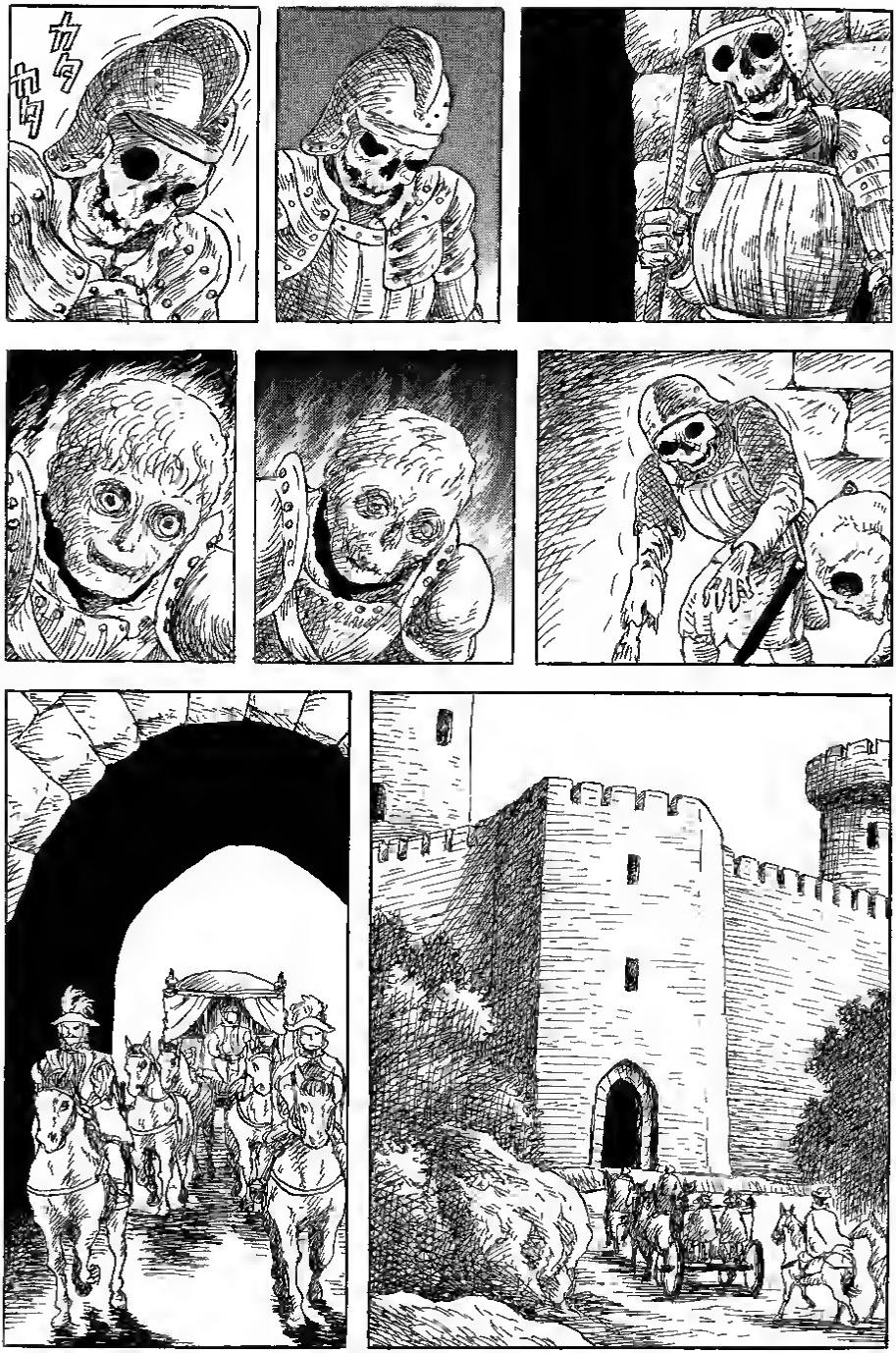
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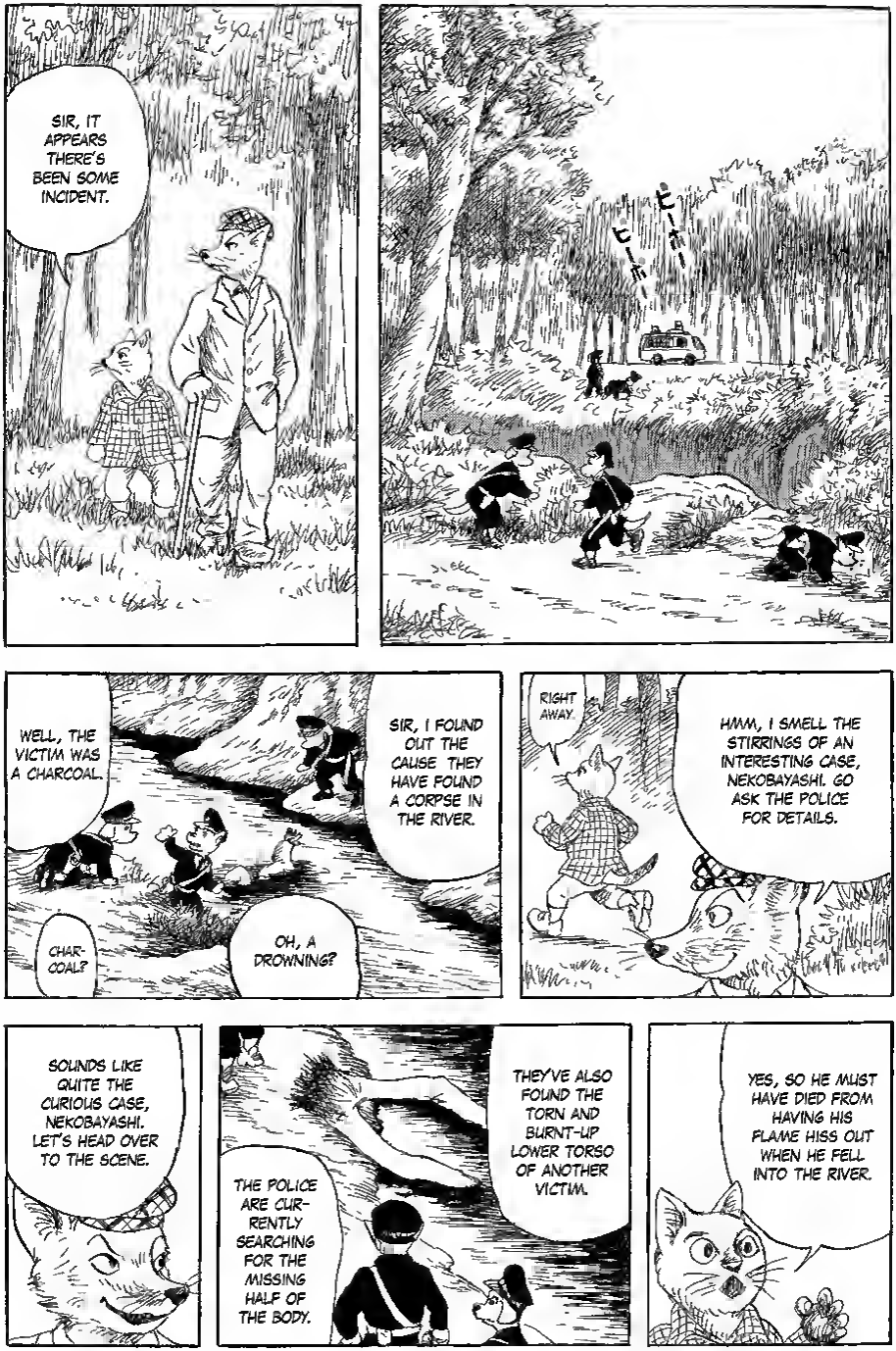
I AM THE MARQUIS OF CARABAS
YOUR HIGHNESS AND MILADY... I HAVE BEEN WAITING FOR YOUR ARRIVAL.

The Straw, the Coal, and the Bean


SIR, IT APPEARS THERE'S BEEN SOME INCIDENT.
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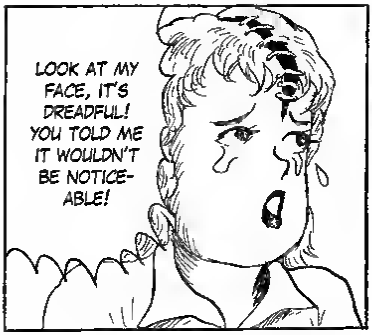
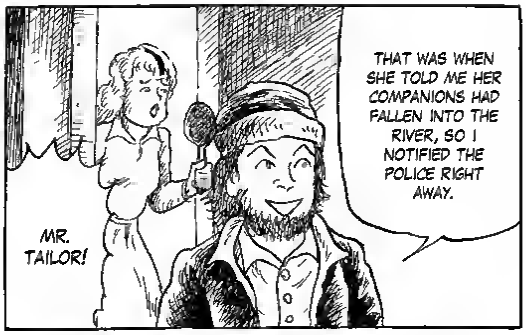
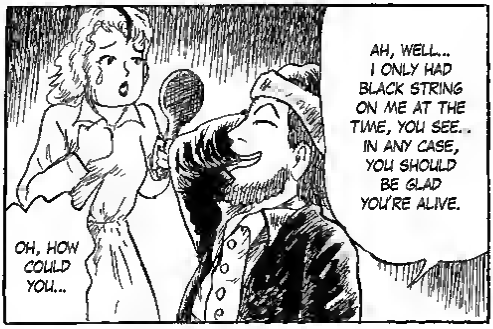
WELL, THE VICTIM WAS A CHARCOAL.
SIR, I FOUND OUT THE CAUSE THEY HAVE FOUND A CORPSE IN THE RIVER.
CHAR-COAL?
OH, A DROWNING?
RIGHT AWAY.
HMM, I SMELL THE STIRRINGS OF AN INTERESTING CASE, NEKOBAYASHI. GO ASK THE POLICE FOR DETAILS.
SOUNDS LIKE QUITE THE CURIOUS CASE, NEKOBAYASHI. LET'S HEAD OVER TO THE SCENE.
THE POLICE ARE CUR-RENTLY SEARCHING FOR THE MISSING HALF OF THE BODY.
THEY'VE ALSO FOUND THE TORN AND BURNT-UP LOWER TORSO OF ANOTHER VICTIM.
YES, SO HE MUST HAVE DIED FROM HAVING HIS FLAME HISS OUT WHEN HE FELL INTO THE RIVER.

ACCIDENT OR MURDER, I'LL JUDGE FOR MYSELF AFTER MY INVESTIGATIONS. WERE THERE ANY WITNESSES?
BUT WE MAY NOT REQUIRE YOUR DETECTIVE SKILLS IF THESE DEATHS TURN OUT TO BE MERELY ACCIDENTAL.
HELLO, KITSUNEKUBA. YOU SURE DO HAVE A NOSE FOR ODD CASES
AH, INSPECTOR INUYAMA, ARE YOU IN CHARGE OF THE CASE?
HELLO SIRS, I'M A TAILOR CURRENTLY ON MY TRAVELS.
WELL, IT WAS THE TAILOR WHO FIRST CONTACTED US.
OWW, OWW..
THAT WAS WHEN I CAME ACROSS A BEAN WHO WAS BLEEDING FROM HER FACE.
I WAS WALKING ALONG THE RIVER EARLIER TODAY IN SEARCH OF A SUITABLE CROSSING. IT'S QUITE ODD THAT SUCH A DEEP RIVER DIDN'T HAVE A BRIDGE NEARBY...
LOOKING CLOSELY, HER FACE HAD SPLIT OPEN ! THUS TOOK OUT MY NEEDLE AND STRING AND STITCHED IT BACK SHUT.
ARE YOU ALRIGHT?

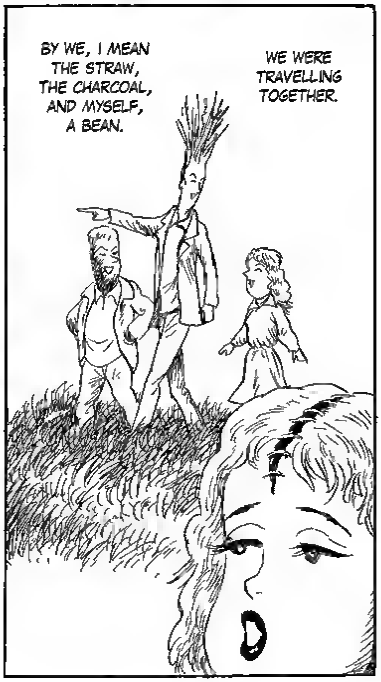

LOOK AT MY FACE, IT'S DREADFUL! YOU TOLD ME IT WOULDN'T BE NOTICE-ABLE!

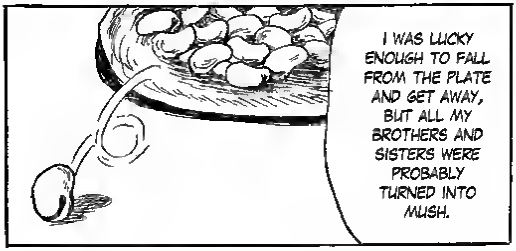

MR. TAILOR!
THAT WAS WHEN SHE TOLD ME HER COMPANIONS HAD FALLEN INTO THE RIVER, SO I NOTIFIED THE POLICE RIGHT AWAY.

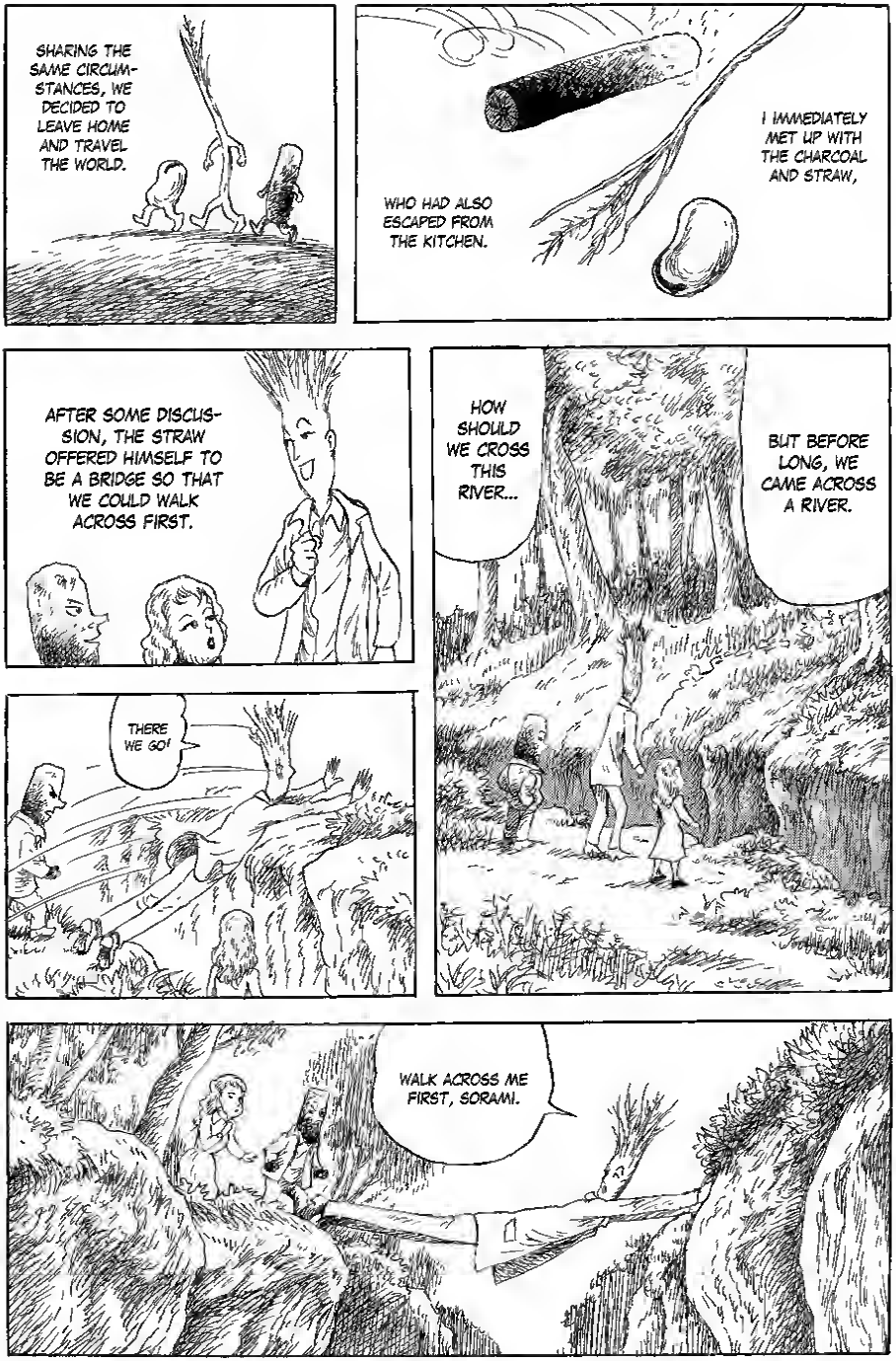
I'D LIKE TO ASK YOU A FEW QUESTIONS IF YOU DON'T MIND...
AH, SO YOU'RE THE BEAN?

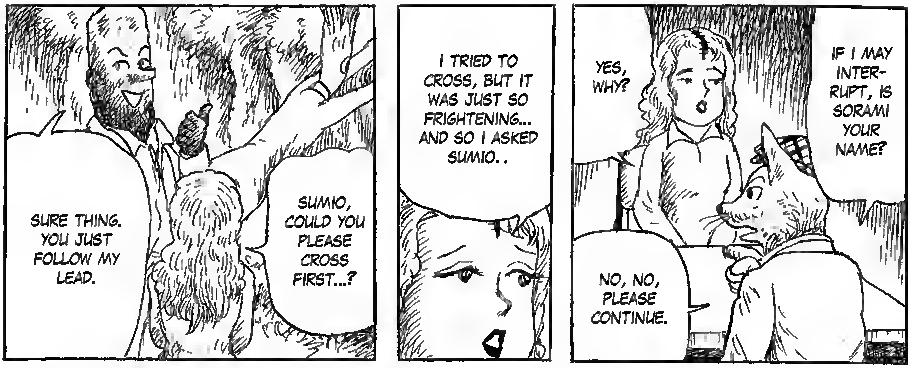

OH, HOW COULD YOU...
AH, WELL... I ONLY HAD BLACK STRING ON ME AT THE TIME, YOU SEE.. IN ANY CASE, YOU SHOULD BE GLAD YOU'RE ALIVE.

WE ORIGINALLY CAME FROM THE SAME KITCHEN OF A HOUSE. I WAS JUST ONE OF MANY BEANS THAT THE HOUSEWIFE WAS PLANNING TO BOIL.

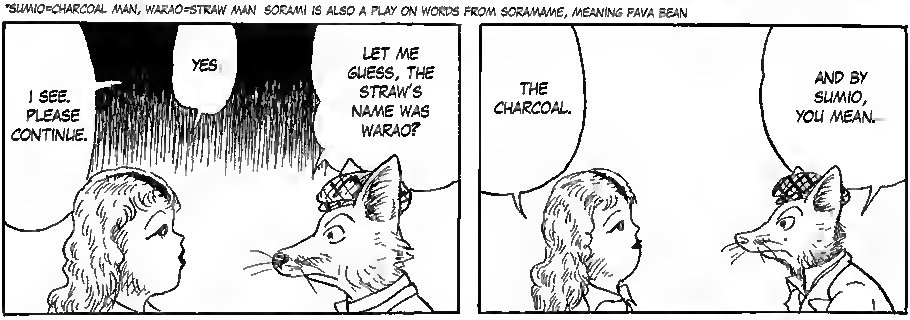

BY WE, I MEAN THE STRAW, THE CHARCOAL, AND MYSELF, A BEAN.
WE WERE TRAVELLING TOGETHER.

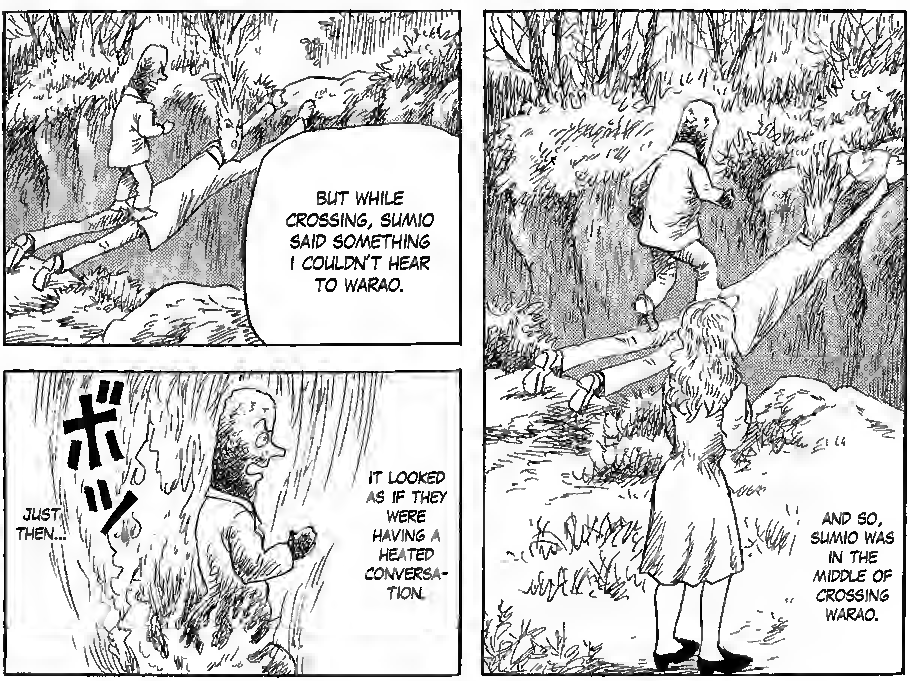

I WAS LUCKY ENOUGH TO FALL FROM THE PLATE AND GET AWAY, BUT ALL MY BROTHERS AND SISTERS WERE PROBABLY TURNED INTO MUSH.


SHARING THE SAME CIRCUMSTANCES, WE DECIDED TO LEAVE HOME AND TRAVEL THE WORLD.
I IMMEDIATELY MET UP WITH THE CHARCOAL AND STRAW,
WHO HAD ALSO ESCAPED FROM THE KITCHEN.
AFTER SOME DISCUSSION, THE STRAW OFFERED HIMSELF TO BE A BRIDGE SO THAT WE COULD WALK ACROSS FIRST.
HOW SHOULD WE CROSS THIS RIVER...
BUT BEFORE LONG, WE CAME ACROSS A RIVER.
THERE WE GO!
WALK ACROSS ME FIRST, SORAMI.


SURE THING. YOU JUST FOLLOW MY LEAD.
SUMIO, COULD YOU PLEASE CROSS FIRST...?
I TRIED TO CROSS, BUT IT WAS JUST SO FRIGHTENING... AND SO I ASKED SUMIO. .
YES, WHY?
IF I MAY INTER-RUPT, IS SORAMI YOUR NAME?
NO, NO, PLEASE CONTINUE.

*SUMIO=CHARCOAL MAN, WARAO=STRAW MAN SORAMI IS ALSO A PLAY ON WORDS FROM SORAMAME, MEANING FAVA BEAN




BUT WHILE CROSSING, SUMIO SAID SOMETHING I COULDN'T HEAR TO WARAO.
JUST THEN...
ボソ
IT LOOKED AS IF THEY WERE HAVING A HEATED CONVERSA-TION.
AND SO, SUMIO WAS IN THE MIDDLE OF CROSSING WARAO.

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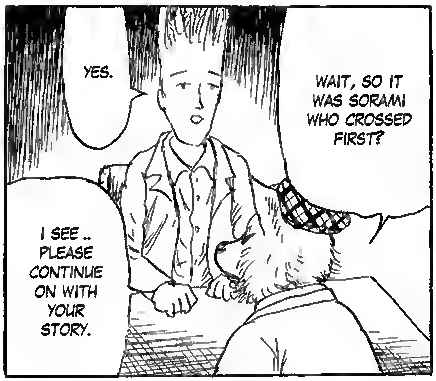
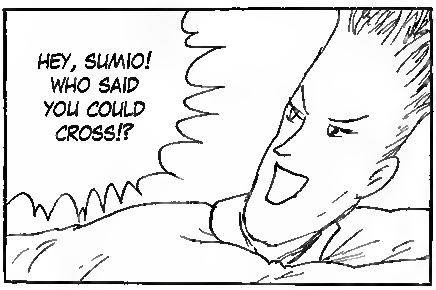
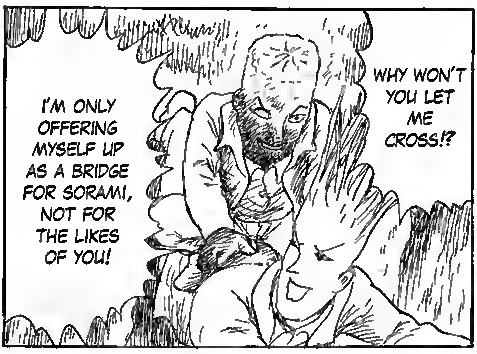
SUMIO!
SUMIO WAS QUITE THE HOT-HEADED PERSON YOU SEE. HE COULD GET FIRED UP OVER THE SMALLEST THINGS.
SOMETHING WARAO SAID MUST HAVE FIRED HIM UP...
WARAO!
SUMIO... WARAO...
ガッ!!
ジュッ
バシャーン

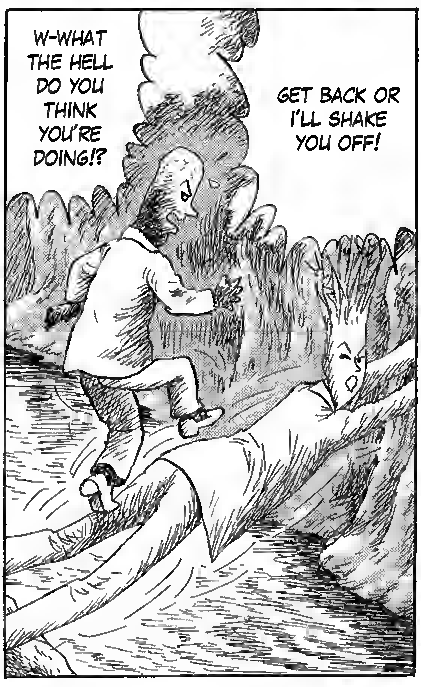
HMM... THERE'S SOMETHING THAT TUGS MY SENSES, HOWEVER. DO YOU HAVE A MAP OF THE SCENE?
FROM HER ACCOUNT, IT WAS AN ACCIDENT RESULTING FROM THE CHARCOAL CATCHING ON FIRE.
I CAN HARDLY BELIEVE IT... MY TWO COMPANIONS DEAD, AND MY FACE SPLIT OPEN WHEN I HIT A ROCK...
HMM, PERHAPS... WERE THERE ANY OTHER WITNESSES?
DID YOU FIGURE OUT SOMETHING?
AH, RIGHT HERE?
SO THIS IS THE RIVER AND THE PATH THEY WERE ON... AND WHERE DID THEY CROSS?
WHAT HAPPENED AT THE RIVER, YOU ASK?
OH, IS HE ALIVE?
WOULD YOU LIKE TO QUESTION THE STRAW?
YES, WE JUST FOUND THE TOP HALF OF HIS BODY.
WELL, IT ALL HAPPENED LIKE THIS. FINDING NO BRIDGE, SORAMI PLEADED THAT I LAY DOWN ACROSS SO SHE COULD CROSS OVER ME. I DIDN'T REALLY WANT TO BUT SHE INSISTED...
IT IS TRUE THAT WE DID GET INTO AN ARGUMENT, BUT...

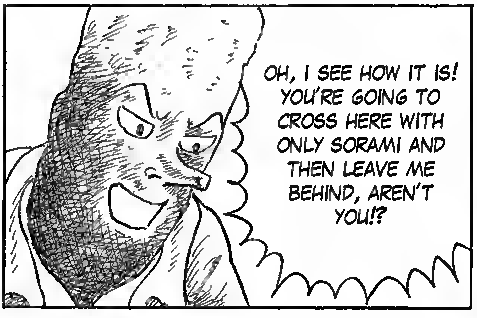

YES.
WAIT, SO IT WAS SORAMI WHO CROSSED FIRST?
I SEE .. PLEASE CONTINUE ON WITH YOUR STORY.

BUT SUMIO STARTED CROSSING EVEN AS SORAMI WAS STILL WALKING OVER ME...
TO TELL YOU THE TRUTH, I ONLY INTENDED TO LET SORAMI CROSS.

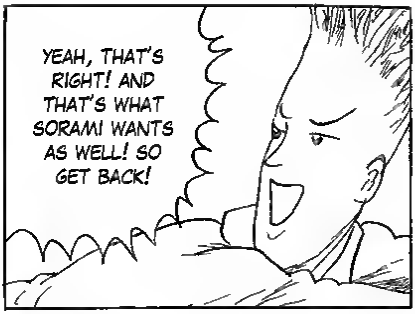

HEY, SUMIO! WHO SAID YOU COULD CROSS!?

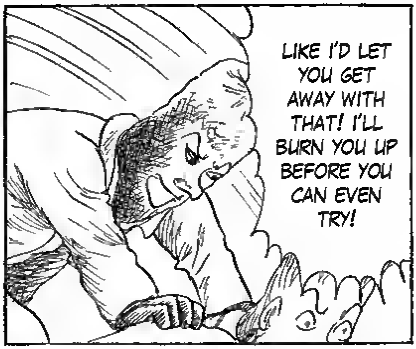

I'M ONLY OFFERING MYSELF UP AS A BRIDGE FOR SORAMI, NOT FOR THE LIKES OF YOU!
WHY WON'T YOU LET ME CROSS!?


W-WHAT THE HELL DO YOU THINK YOU'RE DOING!?
GET BACK OR I'LL SHAKE YOU OFF!


OH, I SEE HOW IT IS! YOU'RE GOING TO CROSS HERE WITH ONLY SORAMI AND THEN LEAVE ME BEHIND, AREN'T YOU!?

ARE YOU INSANE!? YOU'LL FALL TOO IF YOU DO THAT!
LIKE I CARE! SO THEN, WHAT'RE YOU GONNA DO NOW!?


YEAH, THAT'S RIGHT! AND THAT'S WHAT SORAMI WANTS AS WELL! SO GET BACK!


LIKE I'D LET YOU GET AWAY WITH THAT! I'LL BURN YOU UP BEFORE YOU CAN EVEN TRY!

AGHH!

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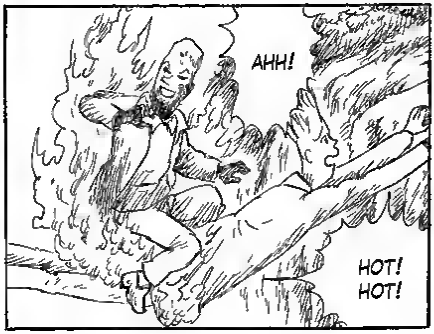
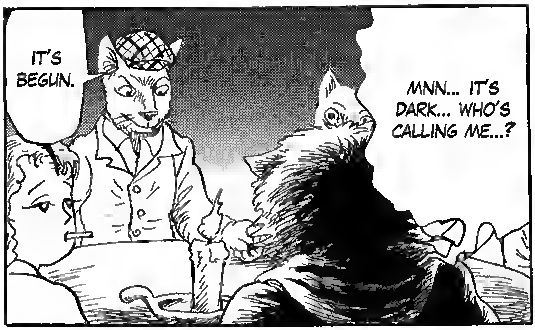
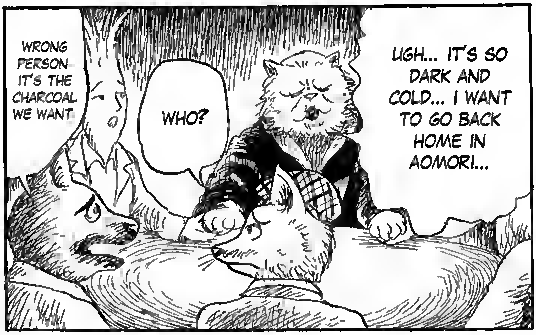

AHH!
HOT! HOT!

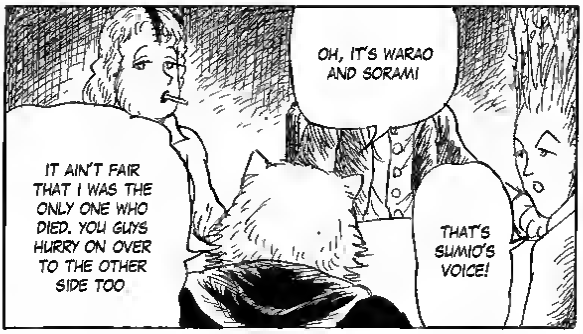
WELL, WHOEVER CROSSED FIRST, THE DEATH OF THE CHARCOAL STILL SEEMS TO HAVE BEEN ACCIDENTAL.
OH, DID I...? I CAN HARDLY RECALL FROM HOW SHAKEN UP I AM...
WARAO TELLS ME IT WAS YOU WHO CROSSED FIRST.
HM...
WHAT'RE YOU TALKING ABOUT? THE CHARCOAL DIED FROM FALLING INTO THE RIVER.
I'M NOT SURE YET, BUT LET'S GO ASK THE CHARCOAL FIRST.
WHY, WHAT IS IT?
PERHAPS... BUT MY INSTINCTS TELL ME THERE'S STILL MORE TO THIS CASE...
THIS IS ONE OF'EM RASHOMON-ESQUE CASES, EH?
HM?
I KNEW IT...
A-AH YES, IN A WAY... IN ANY CASE, LET'S GO SEE THAT MEDIUM.
A SPIRIT MEDIUM? OH, I SEE WHERE THIS IS GOING.
I'VE CALLED A PROFI-CIENT SPIRIT MEDIUM FOR EXACTLY THAT.

LOOK, I TOLD YOU IT WAS THAT IDIOT SUMIO WHO GOT FIRED UP AND ENDED UP KILLING HIMSELF.
A SPIRIT MEDIUM? ARE WE BACK IN THE MIDDLE AGES?
QUIET DOWN. NONE OF YOU ARE LEAVING THIS ROOM UNTIL THIS CASE IS CLEAR. HEY, GO LOCK THIS DOOR.

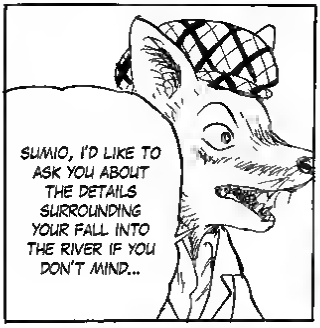

IT'S BEGUN.
MNN... IT'S DARK... WHO'S CALLING ME...?

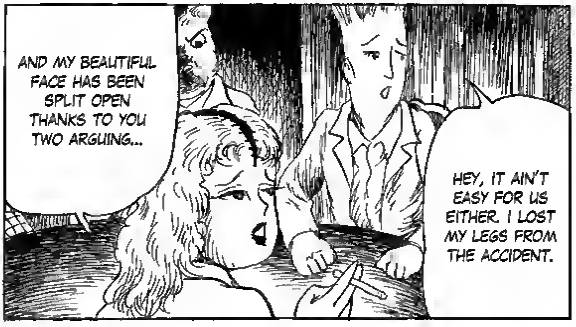
LET US BEGIN CHANNELING THE SPIRIT OF THE DECEASED. JOIN HANDS AND THINK STRONGLY ABOUT THE DECEASED, EVERYONE.


WRONG PERSON. IT'S THE CHARCOAL WE WANT.
WHO?
UGH... IT'S SO DARK AND COLD... I WANT TO GO BACK HOME IN AOMORI...


OH, IT'S WARAO AND SORAMI
IT AIN'T FAIR THAT I WAS THE ONLY ONE WHO DIED. YOU GUYS HURRY ON OVER TO THE OTHER SIDE TOO
THAT'S SUMIO'S VOICE!

MAN, WHAT A DRAG... ALRIGHT, WHO CALLED ME?


SUMIO, I'D LIKE TO ASK YOU ABOUT THE DETAILS SURROUNDING YOUR FALL INTO THE RIVER IF YOU DON'T MIND...


AND MY BEAUTIFUL FACE HAS BEEN SPLIT OPEN THANKS TO YOU TWO ARGUING...
HEY, IT AIN'T EASY FOR US EITHER. I LOST MY LEGS FROM THE ACCIDENT.

I S'POSE.
SO YOU LIT YOUR OWN SELF AFTER BECOMING ANGRY?

OH THAT? WARAO WOULDN'T LET ME CROSS SO WE GOT INTO AN ARGUMENT AS I TRIED TO CROSS OVER HIM AND WELL... YOU KNOW THE REST. TALK ABOUT ROTTEN LUCK.

...DID YOU FEEL THE FIRE STARTING FROM YOUR BOTTOM?

BUT Y'KNOW, I DON'T THINK I'VE EVER MANAGED TO BURST INTO FLAMES LIKE THAT NO MATTER HOW ANGRY I WAS.

IT WAS RIGHT ABOVE MY WAIST.
WHEN I FELT THE FIRE START FROM AROUND MY ASS...
YOU KNOW WHAT, I THINK IT DID. I WAS HOLDING ONTO THE STRAW BOY'S SHOULDERS AS HE WAS TRYING TO SHAKE ME OFF,
IT WAS SORAMI'S IDEA.
WHAT!?
I SEE... ANOTHER QUESTION. I HEAR YOU TRIED TO CROSS EVEN AS SORAMI WAS STILL CROSSING. WHAT WAS YOUR REASON TO RUSH?
YES, HE'S TOLD ME BEFORE ON SEVERAL OCCASIONS THAT WE'RE BETTER OFF TRAVELLING WITHOUT YOU...
WHA-
SUMIO, I'M SURE WARAO INTENDS TO LEAVE YOU ON THIS SIDE ALONE AFTER I CROSS.
YEAH, JUST AS STRAW BOY LAID DOWN, SORAMI SECRETLY WHISPERED TO ME,
AND THIS IS THE PERFECT CHANCE FOR HIM TO LEAVE YOU BEHIND.

SO HOW'S THIS? YOU START CROSSING EVEN WHILE I'M STILL CROSSING.
NO, YOU CAN'T FIGHT HIM NOW OR YOU WON'T BE ABLE TO CROSS.
THAT BASTARD! I'LL TEACH HIM A LESSON FOR TRYING TO PULL THAT CRAP ON ME!
WELL, YES, BUT...
WHO KNOWS... I CAN HARDLY RECALL NOW, THOUGH IT IS TRUE THAT YOU'VE TALKED TO ME ABOUT LEAVING SUMIO BEHIND...
I AIN'T LYING! RIGHT, SORAMI?
YOU'RE LYING! SORAMI WOULDN'T SAY SUCH A THING!
LIKE I SAID, I DON'T REMEMBER.. PROBABLY BECAUSE BOTH OF YOU SAID SIMILAR THINGS TO ME ABOUT ABANDONING THE OTHER...
HEY, SORAMI! WHO'S TELLIN' THE TRUTH!?
YOU WERE THE ONE WHO TOLD ME THAT THAT TIME WOULD BE THE PERFECT CHANCE TO LEAVE SUMIO BEHIND.
I DON'T REMEMBER THAT...
IT CAN'T BE, SORAMI..
PERHAPS I DID SAY SOMETHING LIKE THAT TO ONE OF YOU IN THE HEAT OF THE MOMENT.
I'M JUST A GIRL WHO'S HEART'S A FLUTTER FROM HAVING TWO GUYS FIGHT OVER HER

HMM? WHY NOT?
NOT QUITE, MISS.
WHATEVER THE CASE, THE FACT IS, YOU TWO DECIDED TO ARGUE, WHICH LED TO BOTH OF YOU FALLING INTO THE RIVER.
THE INNOCENT VICTIM HERE IS ME AND MY FACE.
IF WHAT YOU SAID WERE TRUE, THEN YOU NEVER CROSSED AND WOULD HAVE BEEN ON THE SIDE OF THE RIVER WHERE THE ROAD IS FROM THE START.
I REALIZED THAT WAS A LIE WHEN I TOOK A LOOK AT THE MAP.
YOU'VE LIED ON SEVERAL POINTS UP UNTIL NOW. FIRST, YOU SAID YOU LET SUMIO CROSS FIRST BECAUSE YOU WERE TOO SCARED...
YOU DID ALL THAT IN ORDER TO COVER UP THE FACT THAT IT WAS YOU WHO LIT SUMIO ON FIRE.
NO, YOU LIED BECAUSE YOU THOUGHT WARAO WAS DEAD AT THE TIME.
L-LIKE I SAID, I WAS CONFUSED ABOUT THAT MINOR DETAIL BECAUSE I WAS IN SHOCK..
WITH YOUR CIGARETTE, OF COURSE.
THAT'S A LIE! HOW COULD I EVEN DO THAT!?
WHAT!?

HOWEVER, THE REAL INTENT IN THAT WAS TO DISCRETELY PLACE YOUR CIGARETTE BUTT ON WARAO'S BACK WHILE PRETENDING TO THROW IT INTO THE RIVER.
AS THE OTHER SAID, YOU WERE THE ONE WHO CROSSED FIRST. MY GUESS IS YOU CRAWLED SLOWLY ON ALL FOURS ON THE PRETENSE THAT YOU WERE SCARED...
AND WHILE THE TWO WERE BUSY ARGUING, YOUR CIGARETTE BUTT SUCCESSFULLY LIT SUMIO ON FIRE.
NEITHER SUMIO NOR WARAO CAUGHT ONTO THAT.
WHAT!
PROOF? MY PROOF IS.
AND WHERE'S YOUR PROOF?
WHAT!? IS THAT TRUE, SORAMI!?
THE ENTIRE REASON BEHIND TELLING SUMIO TO START CROSSING IMMEDIATELY WAS SO THAT THE BUTT WOULD LIGHT HIM BEFORE IT WENT OUT.

.....
THE LAST LIE YOU TOLD WAS HOW YOU SPLIT YOUR HEAD OPEN ON A ROCK WHILE TRYING TO HELP YOUR TWO COMPANIONS.
UMM, I DON'T THINK THAT'S HOW DETECTIVE FICTION WORKS...
MY INSTINCTS!
FORTUNATELY FOR YOUR SAKE, A TAILOR COINCIDENTALLY CAME TO YOUR HELP.
BUT BECAUSE YOU LAUGHED TOO HARD, YOUR FACE SPLIT OPEN!
WHAT REALLY HAPPENED WAS THAT YOU WERE LAUGHING AT THE TWO WHO FELL INTO THE RIVER.
MY INSTINCTS!
LIKE I SAID, DETEC-TIVE...
Grimm's Fairy Tales
HOWEVER, BECAUSE HE HAD USED BLACK THREAD, SINCE THAT TIME ALL BEANS HAVE HAD A BLACK SEAM.
EVIDENCE? MY EVIDENCE IS...
W-WHAT EVIDENCE DO YOU HAVE FOR THOSE ABSURD CLAIMS?

AHH!
THE MEDIUM'S ON FIRE!
S-SORAMI, IT WAS YOU...!
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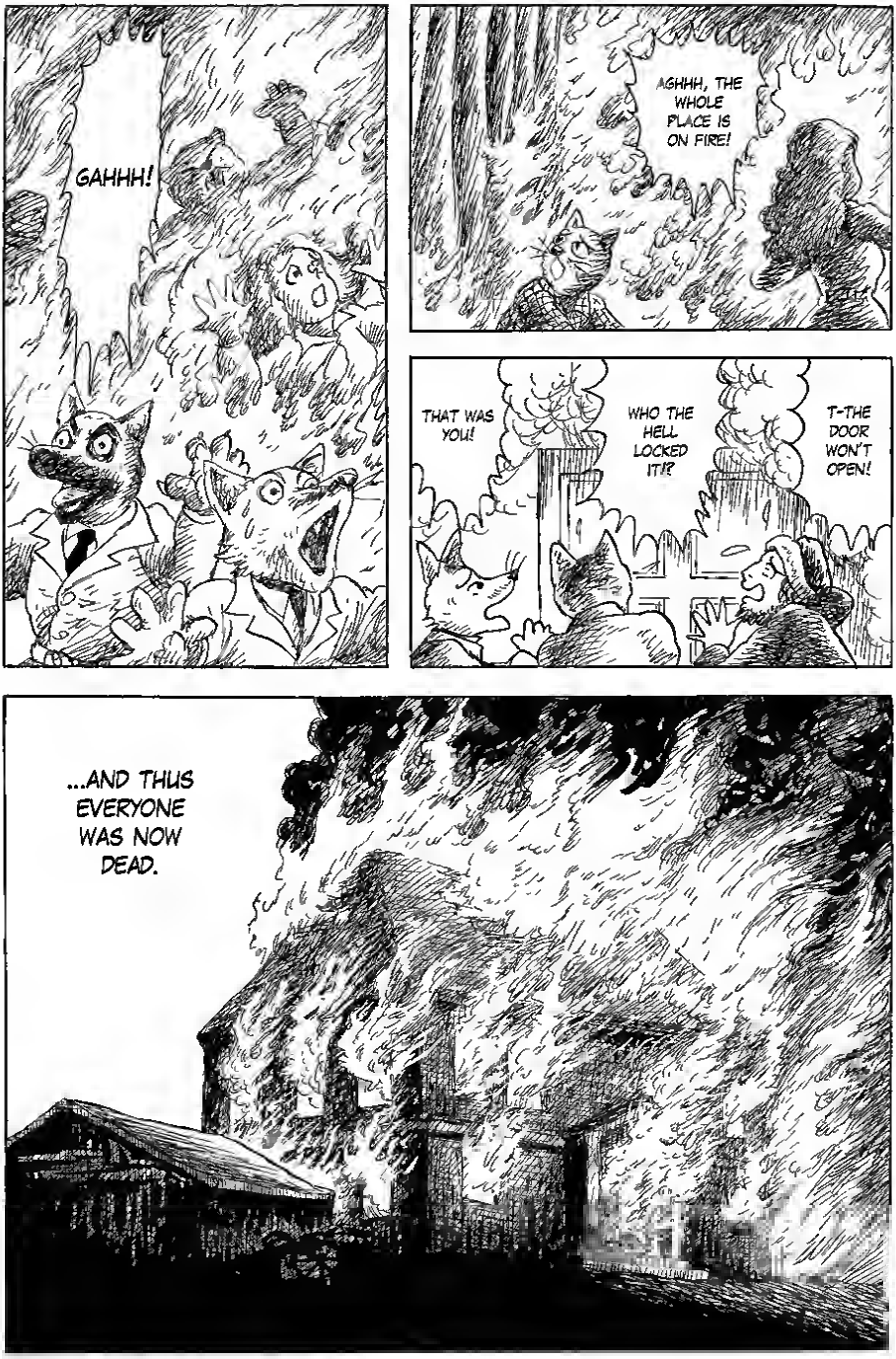
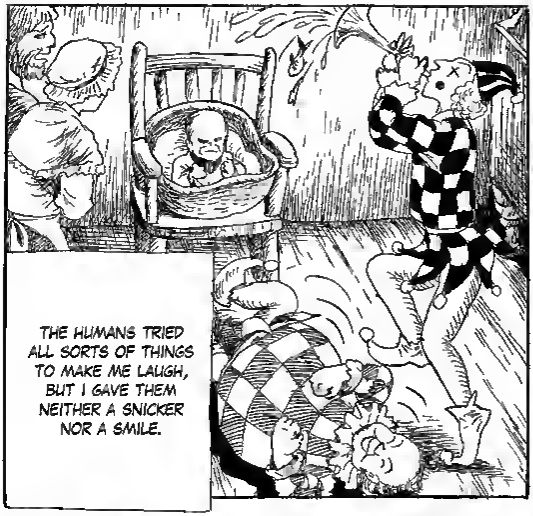
HOT! HOT! HOT!
I'LL HAVE MY REVENGE!
SUMIO'S GOTTEN ALL FIRED UP!


GAHHH!
AGHHH, THE WHOLE PLACE IS ON FIRE!
THAT WAS YOU!
WHO THE HELL LOCKED IT!?
T-THE DOOR WON'T OPEN!
...AND THUS EVERYONE WAS NOW DEAD.

Brewery of Egg Shells

WHY AM I LYING HERE IN THIS CRADLE, YOU WONDER? THAT IS WHAT I DO.
AHHH!
THERE WAS A HUMAN CHILD HERE IN THIS CRADLE A LITTLE WHILE AGO.
DESPITE MY STATURE, I AM AS OLD AS THE FORESTS HERE.
ME? I AM THE CHANGELING OF WESTERWALD.
IF THE CHANGELING LAUGHS, YOU'L HAVE YOUR BABY BACK.
LISTEN CAREFULLY. TAKE THE CHANGELING TO THE KITCHEN, CRACK OPEN SOME EGGS AND BOIL SOME WATER IN THE SHELLS.
M-MY BABY... MY BABY...! I TOOK MY EYES OFF OF HIM FOR JUST A MOMENT AND NOW HE'S BEEN REPLACED BY THIS... THIS...
THIS IS THE ELVES' DOING! THEY MUST HAVE KIDNAPPED THE CHILD AND LEFT THIS CHANGE-LING HERE IN HIS PLACE!

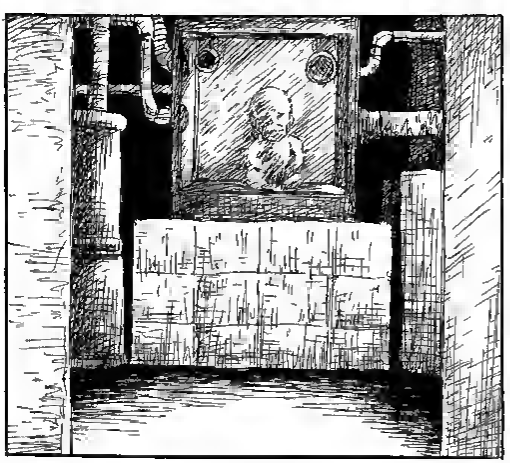
NOW I AM AS OLD AS THE WESTERWALD, BUT NEVER HAVE I SEEN ANYONE, COOK IN EGGSHELLS!
THAT WAS HOW I LOST OVER 100 YEARS AGO.
THAT TIME, I COULDN'T HELP BUT BURST OUT LAUGHING SO I HAD NO CHOICE BUT TO GIVE HER BABY BACK AND RETREAT WITH THE ELVES.
WELL, I'M JUST GOING TO CLEAN THIS HOUSE SO YOU JUST SIT TIGHT AND WATCH.
LET ME TAKE A CRACK AT HIM. GO CALL OVER OUR NEIGHBOUR HANS.
OH NO, IT DIDN'T WORK.
BUT I WON'T FALL FOR THAT TRICK AGAIN!


THE HUMANS TRIED ALL SORTS OF THINGS TO MAKE ME LAUGH, BUT I GAVE THEM NEITHER A SNICKER NOR A SMILE.

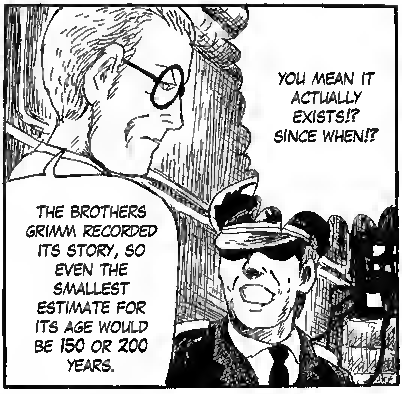
FAT CHANCE, THE COBBLER OF MINDEN ALREADY TRIED THAT TRICK ON ME

A HUNDRED OR SO YEARS PASSED SINCE THEN...

WHY DON'T YOU JUDGE IF IT'S REALLY NONSENSE OR NOT AFTER YOU'VE TAKEN A LOOK AT IT.

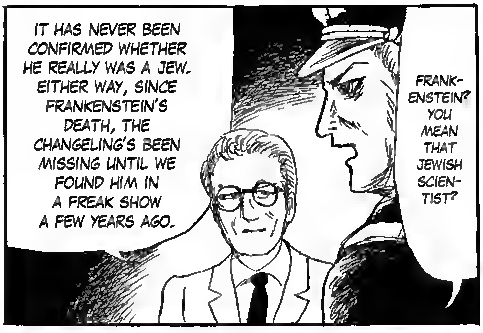


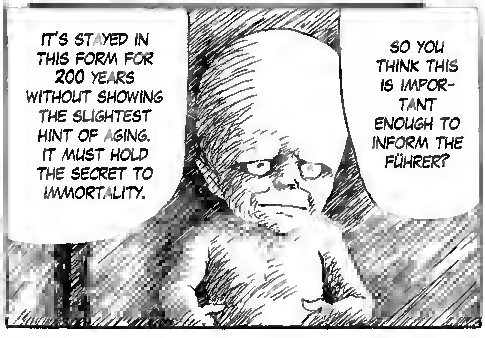
PROFESSOR, DO YOU REALLY INTEND ON TELLING THE FÜHRER SUCH RIDICULOUS NONSENSE?

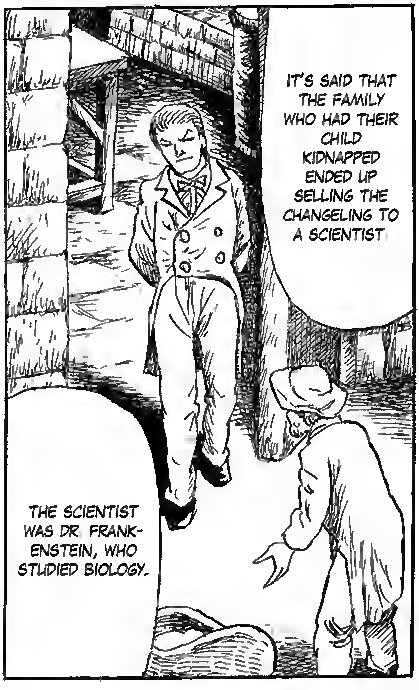

YOU MEAN IT ACTUALLY EXISTS!? SINCE WHEN!?
THE BROTHERS GRIMM RECORDED ITS STORY, SO EVEN THE SMALLEST ESTIMATE FOR ITS AGE WOULD BE 150 OR 200 YEARS.

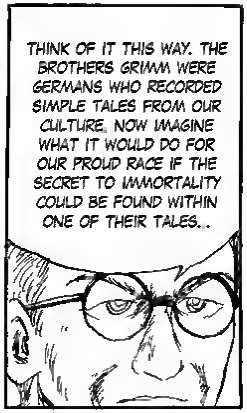
W-WHAT IS THIS!?
AS I JUST SAID, THIS IS THE CHANGELING OF WESTERWALD.

WHERE HAS IT BEEN ALL THIS TIME!?
AND IT'S STAYED IN THIS FORM OF A CHILD FOR 200 YEARS!?

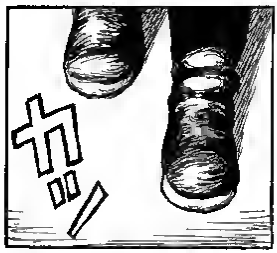

IT HAS NEVER BEEN CONFIRMED WHETHER HE REALLY WAS A JEW. EITHER WAY, SINCE FRANKENSTEIN'S DEATH, THE CHANGELING'S BEEN MISSING UNTIL WE FOUND HIM IN A FREAK SHOW A FEW YEARS AGO.
FRANK-ENSTEIN? YOU MEAN THAT JEWISH SCIEN-TIST?


IT'S STAYED IN THIS FORM FOR 200 YEARS WITHOUT SHOWING THE SLIGHTEST HINT OF AGING. IT MUST HOLD THE SECRET TO IMMORTALITY.
SO YOU THINK THIS IS IMPOR-TANT ENOUGH TO INFORM THE FÜHRER?


IT'S SAID THAT THE FAMILY WHO HAD THEIR CHILD KIDNAPPED ENDED UP SELLING THE CHANGELING TO A SCIENTIST.
THE SCIENTIST WAS DR. FRANK-ENSTEIN, WHO STUDIED BIOLOGY.


THINK OF IT THIS WAY. THE BROTHERS GRIMM WERE GERMANS WHO RECORDED SIMPLE TALES FROM OUR CULTURE. NOW IMAGINE WHAT IT WOULD DO FOR OUR PROUD RACE IF THE SECRET TO IMMORTALITY COULD BE FOUND WITHIN ONE OF THEIR TALES..

Y-YES, BUT...
I'M SURE THE FÜHRER WILL BE QUITE INTERESTED IN IMMORTALITY...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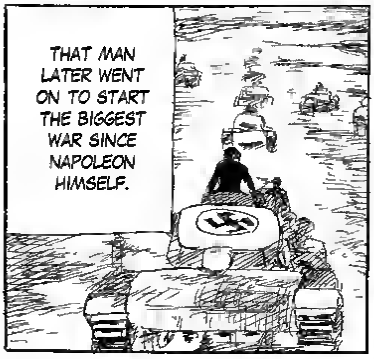
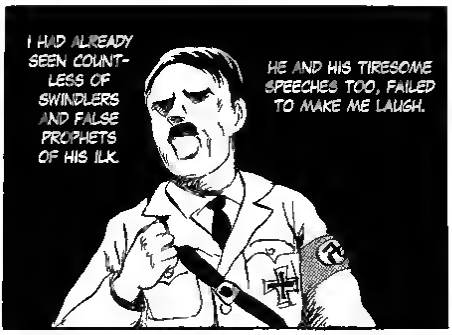
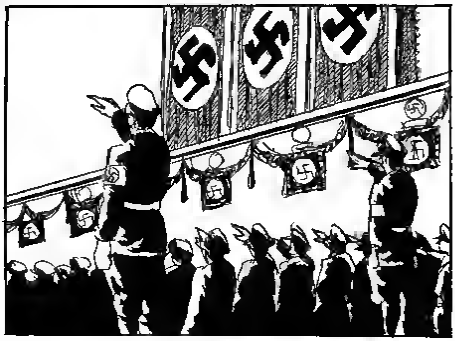
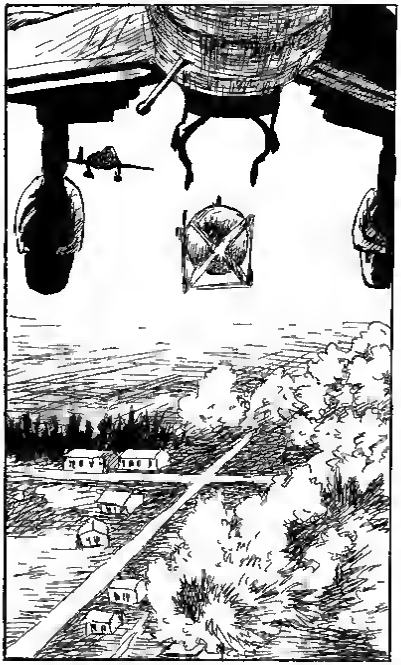

THAT MAN LATER WENT ON TO START THE BIGGEST WAR SINCE NAPOLEON HIMSELF.

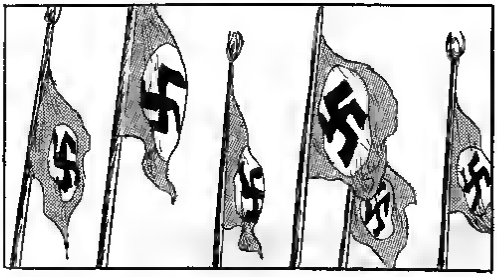
AND THAT IS HOW A MAN NAMED ADOLF CAME TO ORDER SCIENTISTS TO STUDY ME.

MY DAYS WITH THAT SCIENTIST FRANKENSTEIN WERE FAR MORE ENTERTAINING.
THAT CRAZY HUMAN ACTUALLY ATTEMPTED TO CREATE A HUMAN BY STITCHING BODY PARTS FROM CORPSES HERE AND THERE.


I HAD ALREADY SEEN COUNTLESS OF SWINDLERS AND FALSE PROPHETS OF HIS ILK.
HE AND HIS TIRESOME SPEECHES TOO, FAILED TO MAKE ME LAUGH.

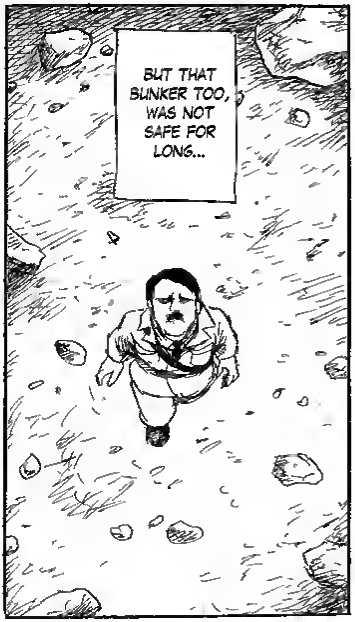






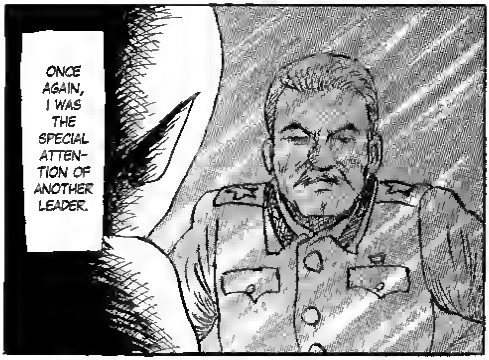
IT WASN'T LONG BEFORE THE PLACE I WAS HOUSED IN WAS FREQUENTED BY BOMBINGS. THE HUMANS THEN MOVED ME DOWN TO AN UNDERGROUND BUNKER WITH THE FÜHRER HIMSELF.

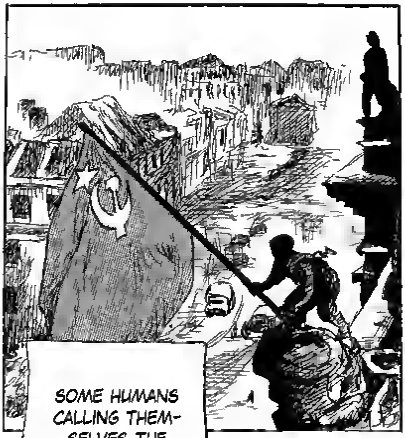
CHANGELING! IF YOU HOLD THE KEY TO IMMORTALITY THEN SHOW ME! TEACH ME!


BUT THAT BUNKER TOO, WAS NOT SAFE FOR LONG...

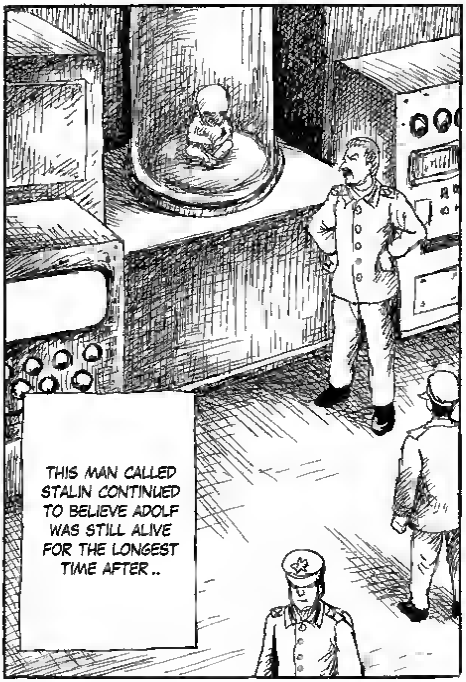
WHAT A DULL MAN...

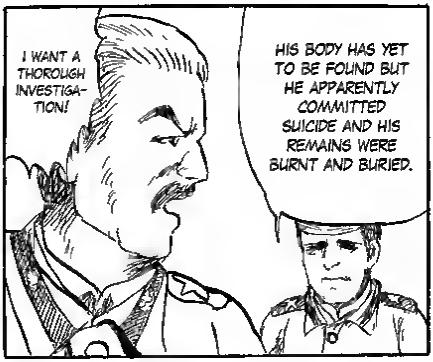
I CANNOT DIE NOW! I MUST SEE THE GLORY OF THE THIRD REICH LAST FOR ANOTHER MILLENIA!

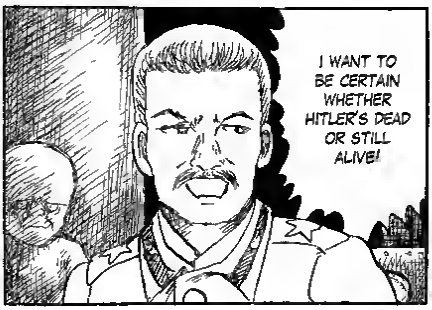

ONCE AGAIN, I WAS THE SPECIAL ATTENTION OF ANOTHER LEADER.

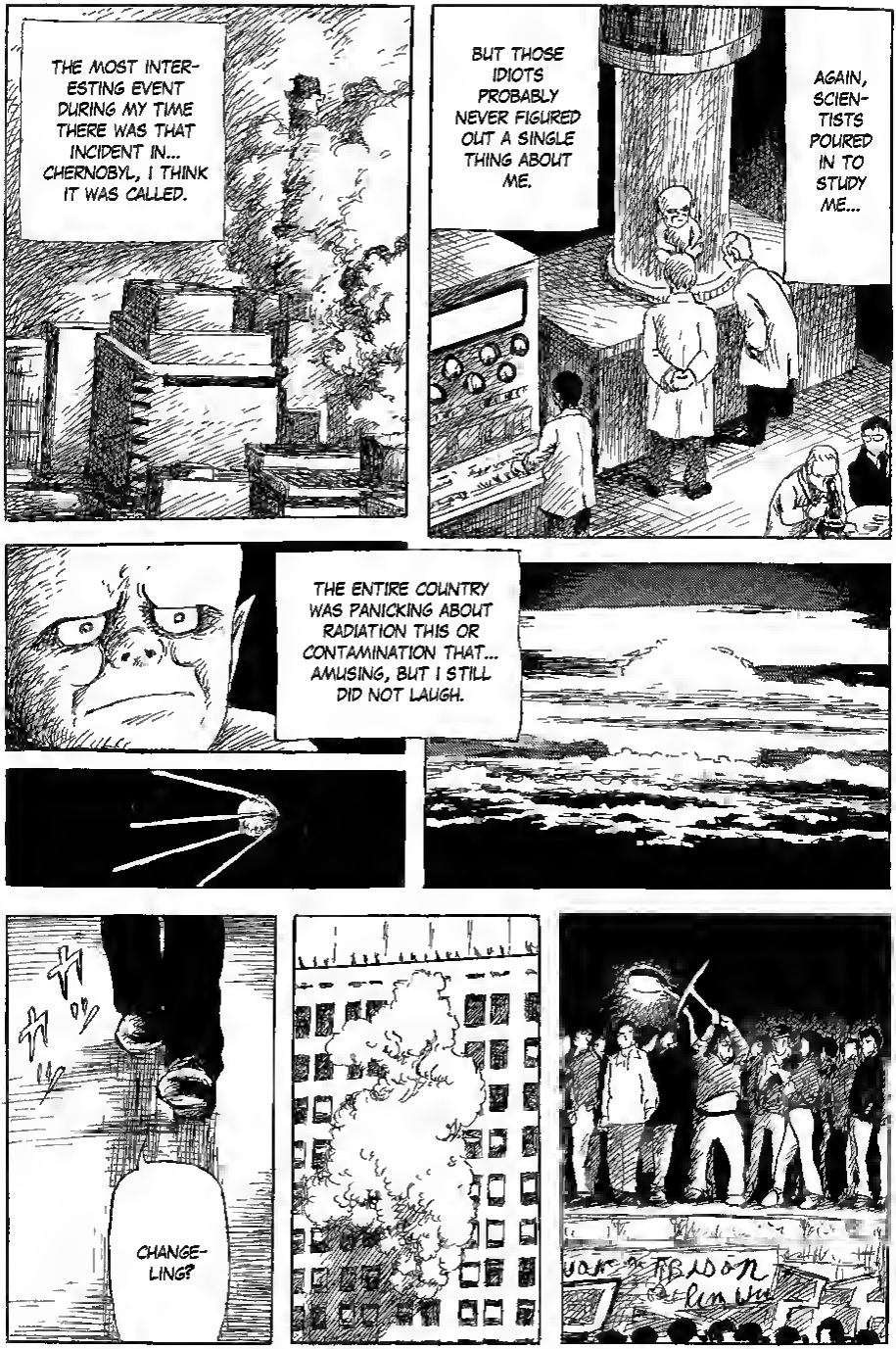

SOME HUMANS CALLING THEMSELVES THE SOVIETS THEN CAME TO BERLIN AND TOOK ME TO THEIR HOME.

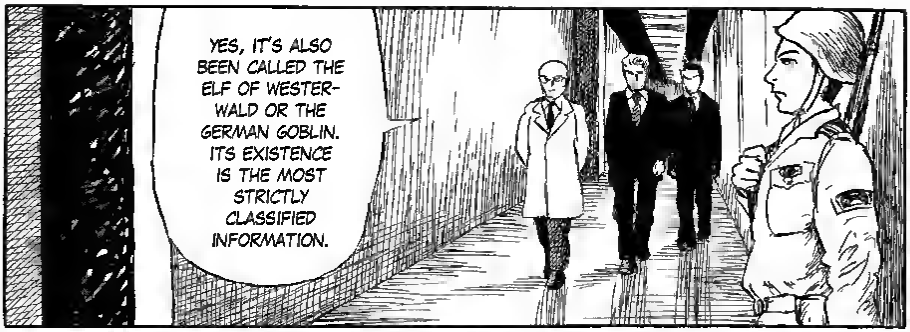
ARE YOU SURE HITLER IS DEAD?

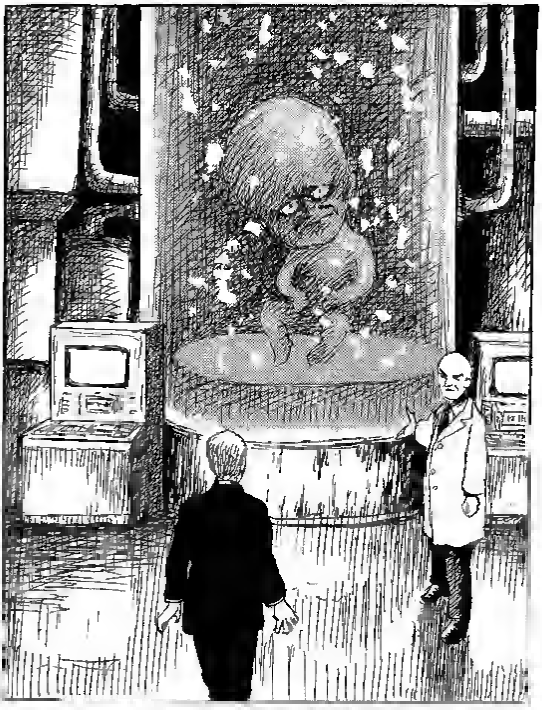

THIS MAN CALLED STALIN CONTINUED TO BELIEVE ADOLF WAS STILL ALIVE FOR THE LONGEST TIME AFTER..

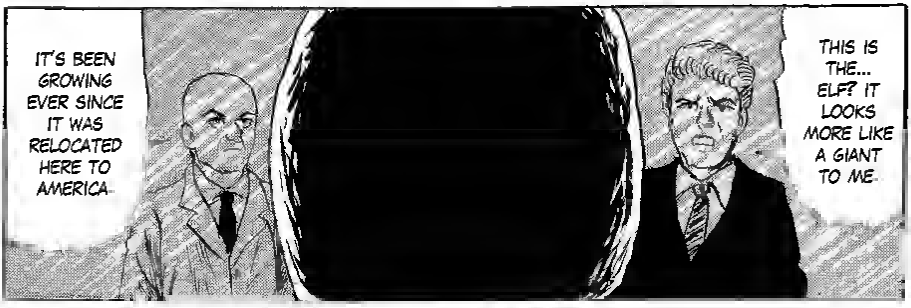

I WANT A THOROUGH INVESTIGATION!
HIS BODY HAS YET TO BE FOUND BUT HE APPARENTLY COMMITTED SUICIDE AND HIS REMAINS WERE BURNT AND BURIED.


I WANT TO BE CERTAIN WHETHER HITLER'S DEAD OR STILL ALIVE!

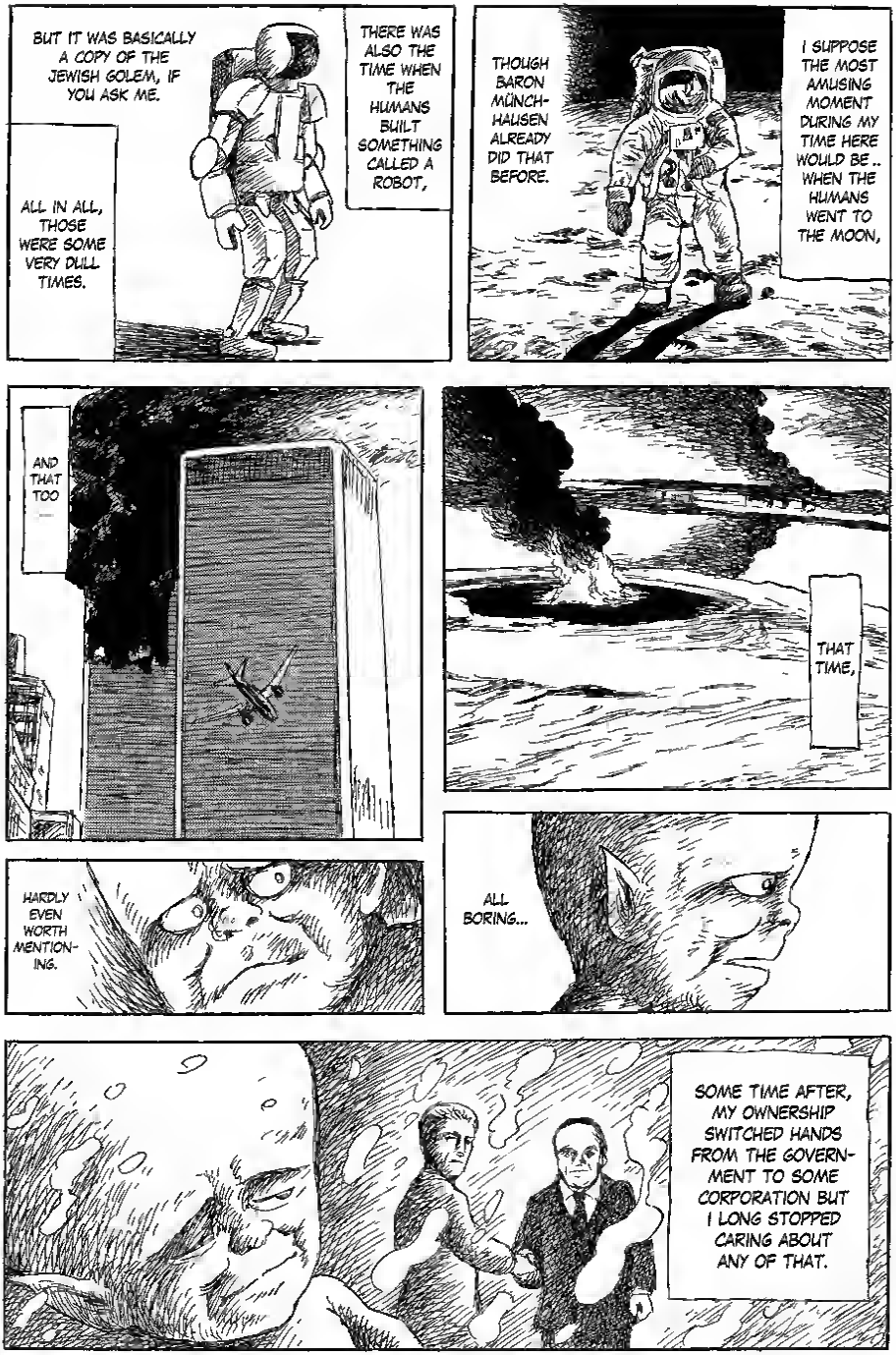

THE MOST INTERESTING EVENT DURING MY TIME THERE WAS THAT INCIDENT IN... CHERNOBYL, I THINK IT WAS CALLED.
BUT THOSE IDIOTS PROBABLY NEVER FIGURED OUT A SINGLE THING ABOUT ME.
AGAIN, SCIENTISTS POURED IN TO STUDY ME...
THE ENTIRE COUNTRY WAS PANICKING ABOUT RADIATION THIS OR CONTAMINATION THAT... AMUSING, BUT I STILL DID NOT LAUGH.
CHANGELING?


YES, IT'S ALSO BEEN CALLED THE ELF OF WESTERWALD OR THE GERMAN GOBLIN. ITS EXISTENCE IS THE MOST STRICTLY CLASSIFIED INFORMATION.



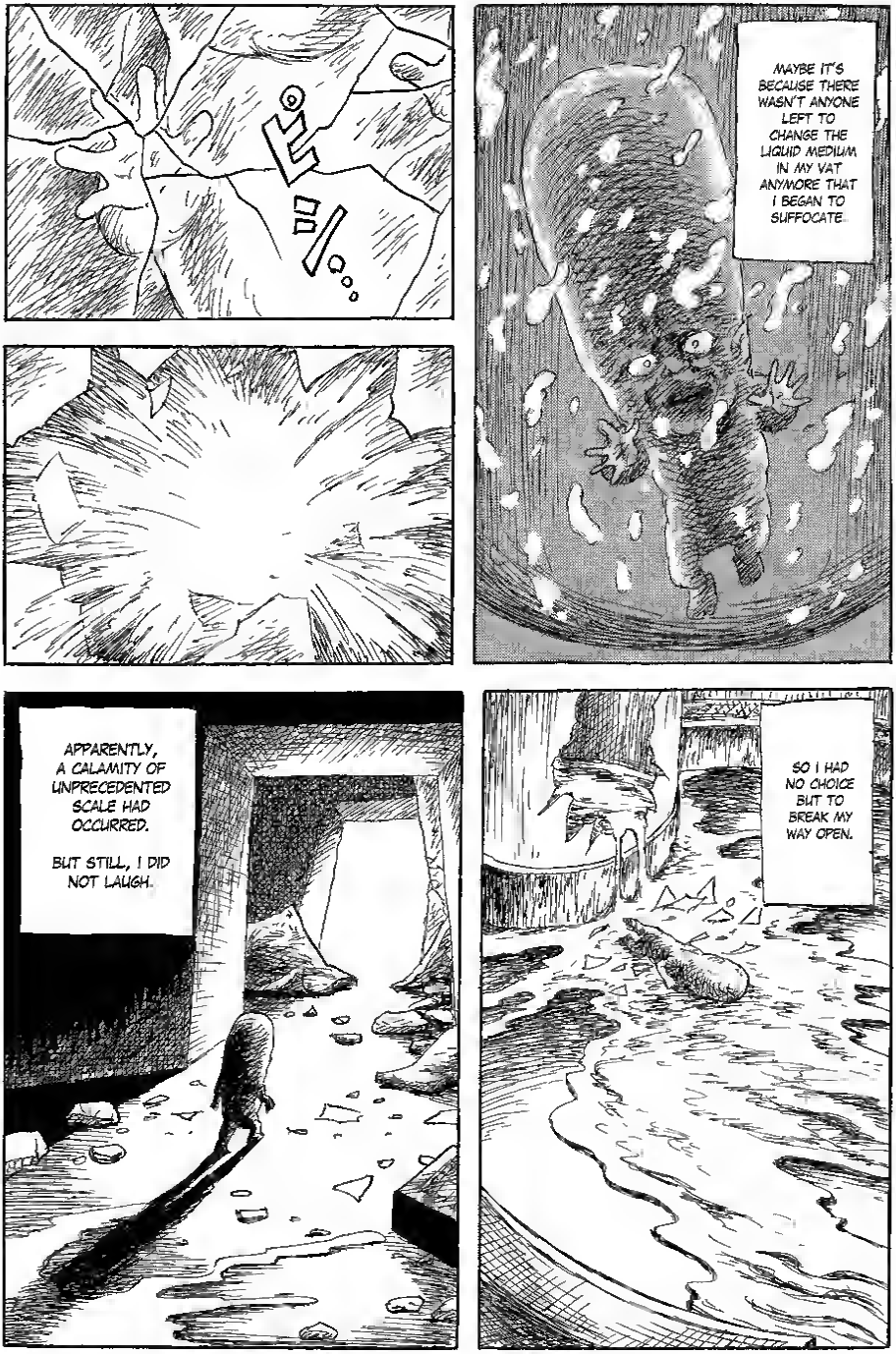

IT'S BEEN GROWING EVER SINCE IT WAS RELOCATED HERE TO AMERICA.
THIS IS THE... ELF? IT LOOKS MORE LIKE A GIANT TO ME.

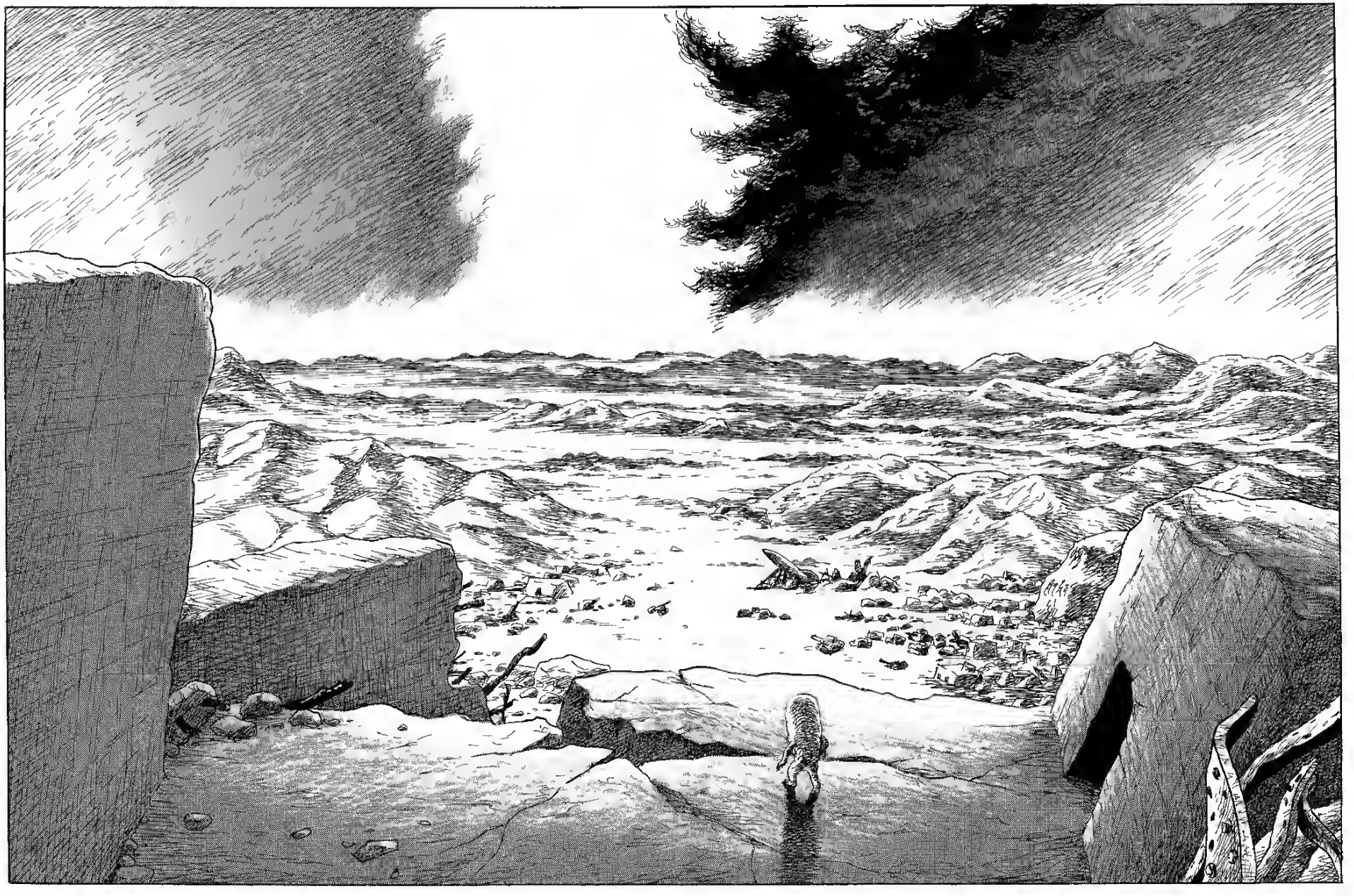
I'VE GOTTEN SO BIG NOW I CAN HARDLY EVEN SIT DOWN STRAIGHT OUTSIDE THIS VAT. LIFE IN THIS VAT ISN'T SO BAD THOUGH, FLOATING HERE IS RATHER RELAXING.
SOME SHADY SOVIET SCIENTISTS SMUGGLED ME OUT AND SOLD ME OUT OVER TO AMERICA ONCE THEIR COUNTRY COLLAPSED.
WHY AM I HERE, YOU ASK?
IS THAT THE KEY TO IMMORTALITY?
MOST LIKELY, MR. PRESIDENT.
AT FIRST, WE WERE PROGRESSING STEADILY BUT WE'VE SINCE HIT A WALL.. THERE'S SOMETHING IN ITS GENETIC MATERIAL THAT WE JUST CAN'T SEEM TO ANALYZE.
SO HOW FAR HAS THE RESEARCH PROGRESSED?
AT LEAST TRY TO MAKE ME LAUGH, YOU INCOMPETENTS.
ALL THEY DO IS COME TO GAWK AT ME AND BLATHER ON AND ON ABOUT IMMORTALITY THIS AND IMMORTALITY THAT..
THESE MEN TOO WERE VERY DULL.


BUT IT WAS BASICALLY A COPY OF THE JEWISH GOLEM, IF YOU ASK ME.
THERE WAS ALSO THE TIME WHEN THE HUMANS BUILT SOMETHING CALLED A ROBOT,
ALL IN ALL, THOSE WERE SOME VERY DULL TIMES.
THOUGH BARON MÜNCH-HAUSEN ALREADY DID THAT BEFORE.
I SUPPOSE THE MOST AMUSING MOMENT DURING MY TIME HERE WOULD BE.. WHEN THE HUMANS WENT TO THE MOON,
AND THAT TOO
THAT TIME,
HARDLY EVEN WORTH MENTION-ING.
ALL BORING...
SOME TIME AFTER, MY OWNERSHIP SWITCHED HANDS FROM THE GOVERN-MENT TO SOME CORPORATION BUT I LONG STOPPED CARING ABOUT ANY OF THAT.

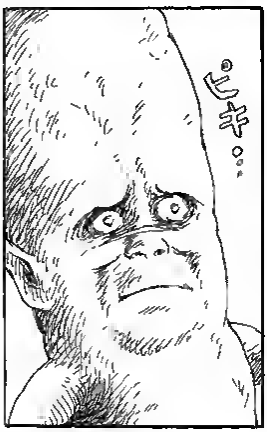
＊通称ほらふき男爵

NOTHING BUT A LOT OF SWINDLERS OF THE SAME ILK AS THAT ADOLF, IF YOU ASK ME...
BUT BASICALLY THEY ONLY USED ME AS A SHOWCASE TO GET OLD MEN TO SIGN CHECKS FOR THEM.
THE CORPORATION HAD SOMETHING TO DO WITH IMMORTALITY.
SOME FAIRLY BIG EVENTS HAPPENED WHILE I DOZED OFF IN THE VAT WHILE THERE, SO I CAN HARDLY RECALL WHAT HAPPENED.
AND THEN THERE WERE REPEATED EARTHQUAKES AND VOLCANIC ERUPTIONS.
THERE WERE SMOKE CLOUDS RISING UP FROM ALL OVER THE WORLD.
NOT A SINGLE ONE.
WHEN I CAME TO, I NOTICED THERE WEREN'T ANY HUMANS WATCHING OVER ME.
SOMETHING 'BOUT SATELLITES OR METEORITES FALLING FROM THE SKY...


ピコ。。。
MAYBE IT'S BECAUSE THERE WASN'T ANYONE LEFT TO CHANGE THE LIQUID MEDIUM IN MY VAT ANYMORE THAT I BEGAN TO SUFFOCATE.
APPARENTLY, A CALAMITY OF UNPRECEDENTED SCALE HAD OCCURRED.
BUT STILL, I DID NOT LAUGH.
SO I HAD NO CHOICE BUT TO BREAK MY WAY OPEN.



I HAD A FEELING THERE WASN'T A SINGLE HUMAN LEFT IN THE ENTIRE WORLD NOW.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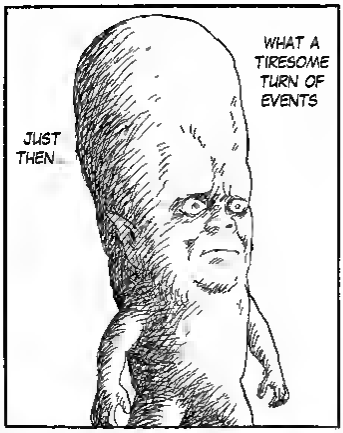
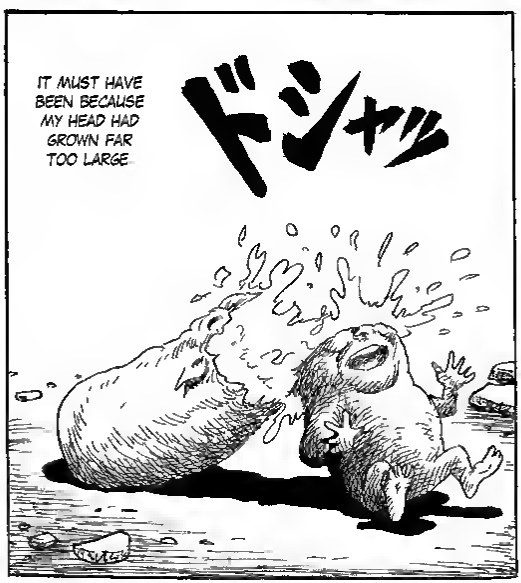
W-WHOA


JUST THEN
WHAT A TIRESOME TURN OF EVENTS


IT MUST HAVE BEEN BECAUSE MY HEAD HAD GROWN FAR TOO LARGE
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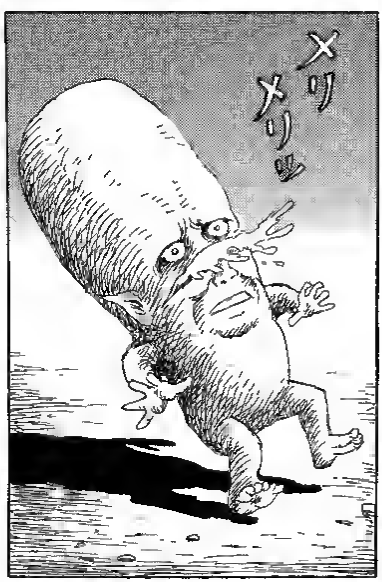
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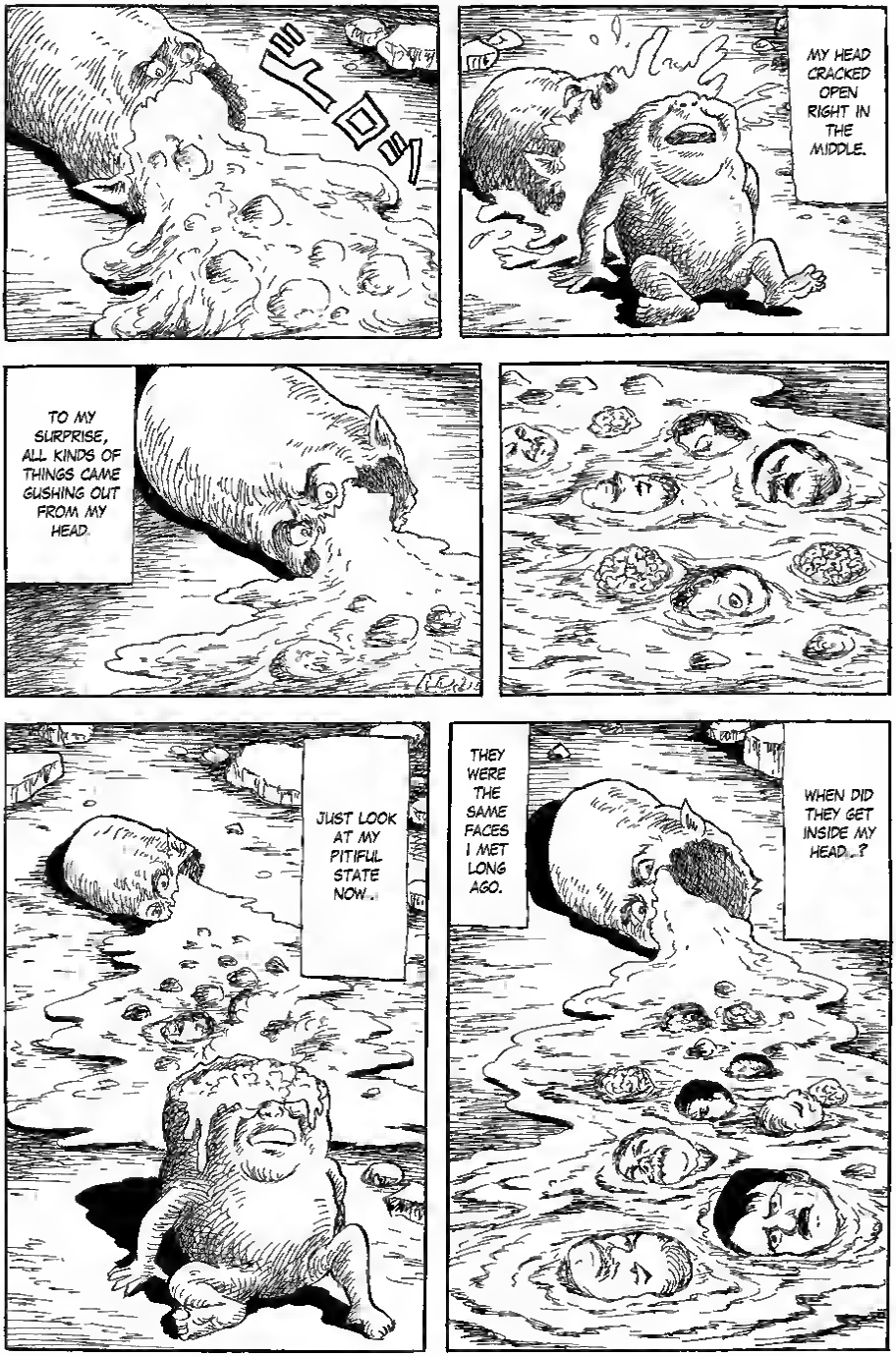
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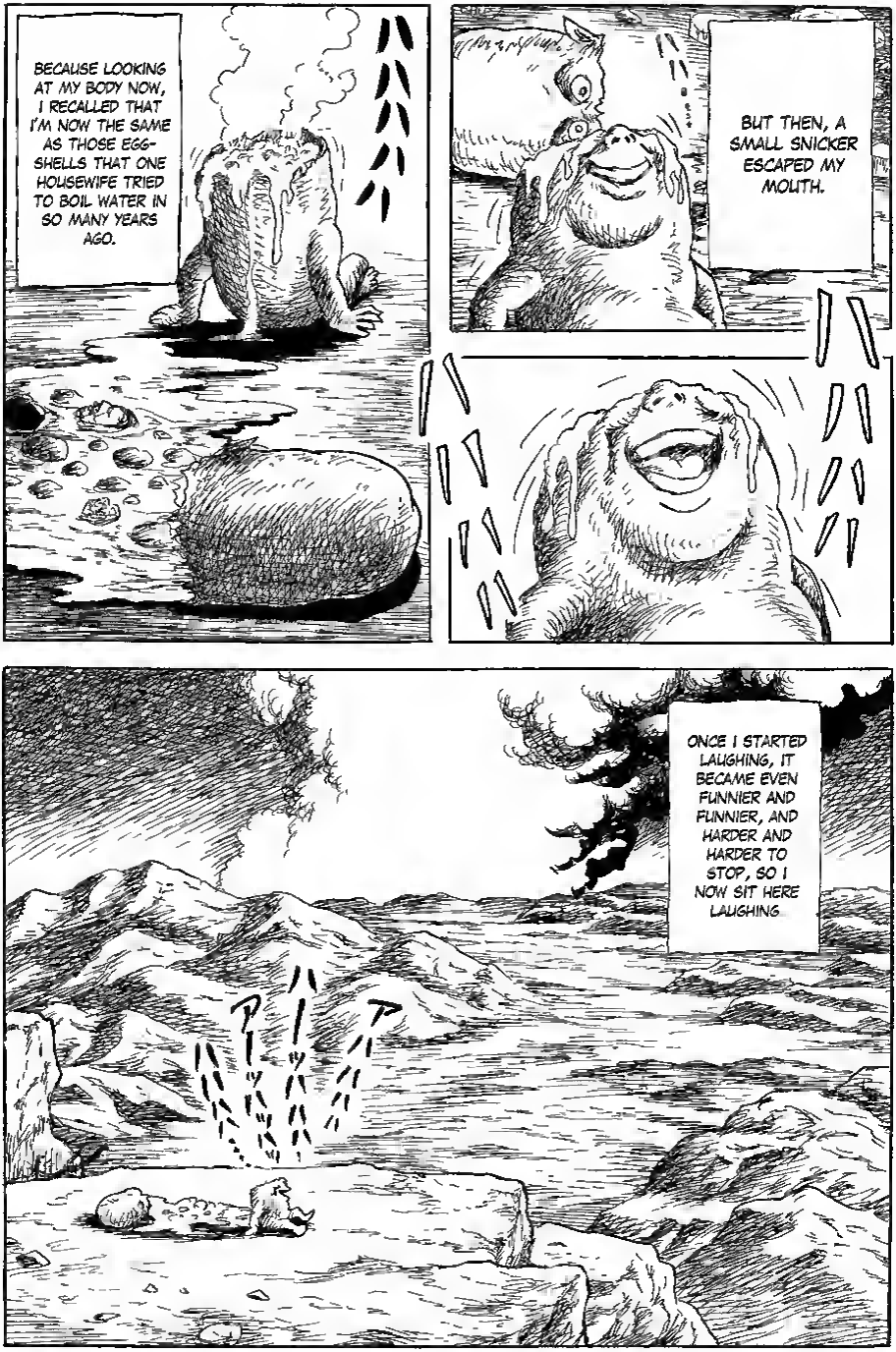
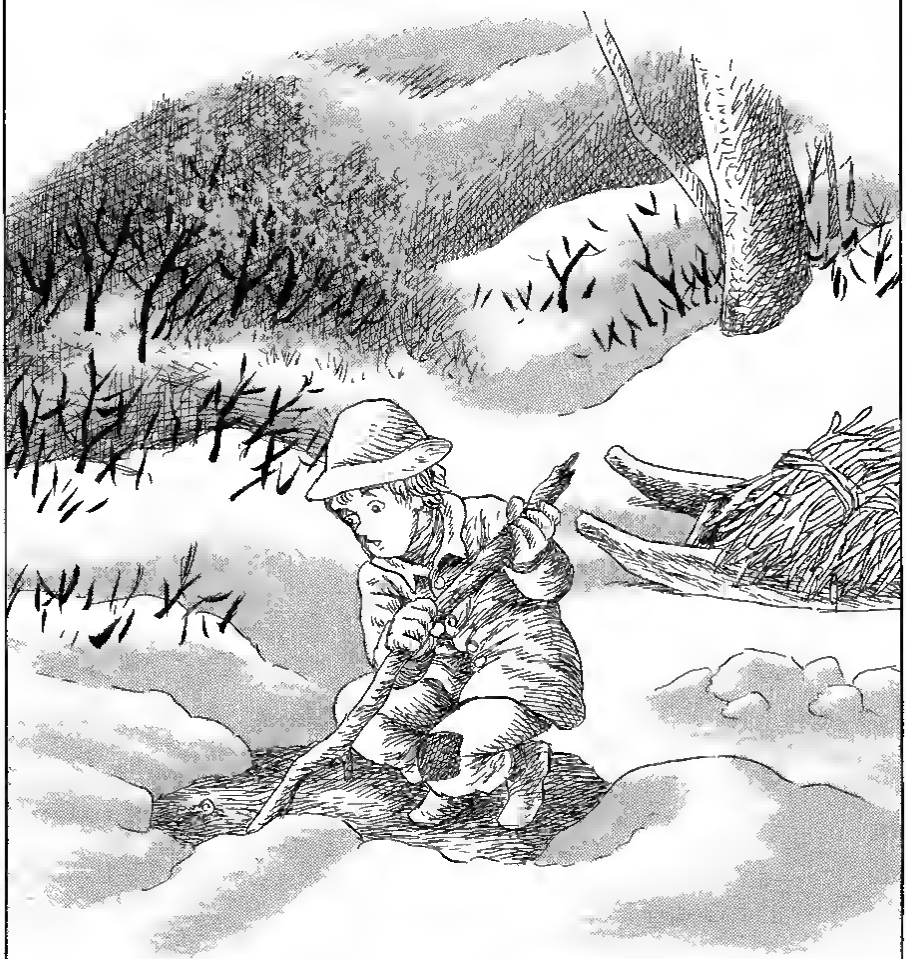
MY HEAD CRACKED OPEN RIGHT IN THE MIDDLE.
TO MY SURPRISE, ALL KINDS OF THINGS CAME GUSHING OUT FROM MY HEAD.
JUST LOOK AT MY PITIFUL STATE NOW..
THEY WERE THE SAME FACES I MET LONG AGO.
WHEN DID THEY GET INSIDE MY HEAD..?

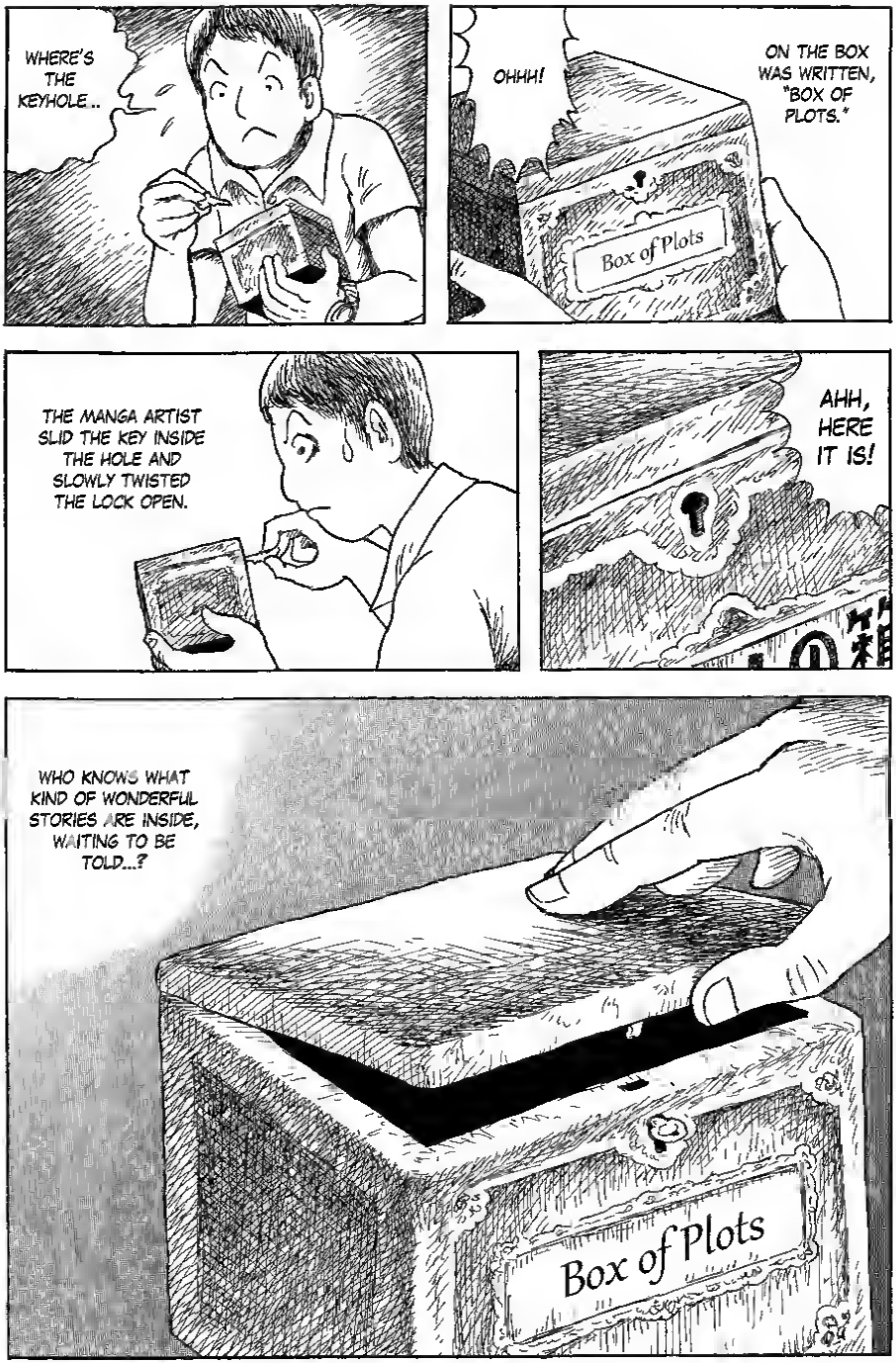

BECAUSE LOOKING AT MY BODY NOW, I RECALLED THAT I'M NOW THE SAME AS THOSE EGG-SHELLS THAT ONE HOUSEWIFE TRIED TO BOIL WATER IN SO MANY YEARS AGO.
BUT THEN, A SMALL SNICKER ESCAPED MY MOUTH.
ONCE I STARTED LAUGHING, IT BECAME EVEN FUNNIER AND FUNNIER, AND HARDER AND HARDER TO STOP, SO I NOW SIT HERE LAUGHING

The Golden Key



ONCE UPON A TIME, THERE LIVED A MANGA ARTIST.
THE MANGA ARTIST SAT TROUBLED,
FOR YOU SEE, HIS DEADLINE WAS SOON APPROACHING AND HE STILL HAD NOT EVEN ONE IDEA ON WHAT TO DRAW.
AND SO HE TOOK A WALK OUTSIDE, IN SEARCH FOR ANY MATERIAL HE COULD TURN INTO A STORY.
HM?

ON THE KEY WAS WRITTEN, "KEY TO IDEAS."
Key to Ideas
BY THE BUSHES AT A PARK, HE FOUND A GOLDEN KEY.
SO HE SEARCHED ALL OVER FOR A LOCK.
IF THERE'S A KEY, THEN THERE SHOULD ALSO BE A LOCK...
A KEY TO IDEAS!?
AHH, A BOX!
AND THEN...


WHERE'S THE KEYHOLE..
OHHH!
ON THE BOX WAS WRITTEN, "BOX OF PLOTS."
Box of Plots
THE MANGA ARTIST SLID THE KEY INSIDE THE HOLE AND SLOWLY TWISTED THE LOCK OPEN.
AHH, HERE IT IS!
WHO KNOWS WHAT KIND OF WONDERFUL STORIES ARE INSIDE, WAITING TO BE TOLD...?
Box of Plots

初出一覧

七匹の子やぎ（グリム童話「狼と七匹の子やぎ」より）　ミステリーズ！ vol.01
奇妙なおよばれ（グリム童話「奇妙なおよばれ」「名付け親」より）　ミステリーズ！ vol.02
漁師とおかみさんの話（グリム童話「漁師とおかみさんの話」より）　ミステリーズ！ vol.03
スノウホワイト（グリム童話「白雪姫」より）　ミステリーズ！ vol.04
小ねずみと小鳥と焼きソーセージ（グリム童話「小ねずみと小鳥と焼きソーセージ」より）　ミステリーズ！ vol.05
ラプンツェル（グリム童話「ラプンツェル」より）　ミステリーズ！ vol.07
コルベス様（グリム童話「コルベス様」より）　ミステリーズ！ vol.09
めんどりはなぜ死んだか（グリム童話「めんどりの死んだ話」より）　ミステリーズ！ vol.11
カラバ侯爵（シャルル・ペローの昔ばなし「長靴をはいた猫」より）　ミステリーズ！ vol.13
藁と炭とそら豆（グリム童話「旅に出た藁と炭とそら豆」より）　ミステリーズ！ vol.17
とりかえっ子の話（グリム童話「子供を取り替えられた女の人の話」より）　ミステリーズ！ vol.15
金の鍵（グリム童話「金の鍵」より）　書き下ろし

The Wolf and the Seven Young Goats

STORY:
ONCE UPON A TIME, THERE WAS A MOTHER GOAT WITH 7 CHILDREN. ONE DAY, AFTER TELLING HER CHILDREN NOT TO OPEN THE DOOR FOR THE WOLF, SHE WENT TO THE WOODS TO GET SOME FOOD. SOON AFTER, THE WOLF CAME KNOCKING ON THE DOOR AND SAID, "OPEN THE DOOR, CHILDREN DEAR."

"OUR MOTHER DOESN'T HAVE SUCH A GRUFF VOICE. YOU MUST BE THE WOLF," THE CHILDREN REPLIED. THE WOLF LEFT TO BUY SOME CHALK, WHICH HE ATE TO SOFTEN HIS VOICE. HE THEN CAME BACK AND TRIED ONCE AGAIN. "OPEN THE DOOR, CHILDREN DEAR. I'VE GOT GIFTS FOR ALL OF YOU."

HOWEVER, SEEING THE WOLF'S BLACK LEG UNDER THE DOOR, THE CHILDREN REFUSED TO OPEN THE DOOR. THE WOLF THEN WENT TO A BAKERY TO PUT WHITE FLOUR ON HIS LEGS. HE NOW CAME BACK AND TRIED FOR THE THIRD TIME.

"OPEN THE DOOR, CHILDREN DEAR. I'VE GOT A WONDERFUL GIFT." FOOLED BY THE WOLF'S SOFT VOICE AND HIS WHITE LEGS, THE CHILDREN OPENED THE DOOR. UPON SEEING THE WOLF, THE TERRIFIED CHILDREN RAN TO HIDE THEMSELVES. THEY HID UNDER THE BED, TABLE, IN THE STOVE, KITCHEN, CUPBOARD, AND THE CLOCK CASE. STILL, THE WOLF FOUND AND SWALLOWED THEM WHOLE. HOWEVER, THE WOLF DID NOT FIND THE CHILD IN THE CLOCK CASE. AFTER EATING HIS FILL, THE WOLF LEFT THE HOUSE.

UPON RETURNING TO THE HOUSE, THE MOTHER GOAT HEARD WHAT HAPPENED FROM HER LONE SURVIVING CHILD. AFTER GRIEVING, SHE THOUGHT MAYBE THERE WAS STILL SOME HOPE LEFT AND WENT OUTSIDE TO LOOK FOR THE WOLF. SHE FOUND THE WOLF IN THE MEADOW, FAST ASLEEP AND SNORING. SEEING THE WOLF'S STOMACH RUMBLE, SHE TOOK A PAIR OF SCISSORS AND CUT IT OPEN. OUT CAME HER 6 CHILDREN, SAFE AND SOUND. SHE THEN TOLD HER CHILDREN TO FILL THE WOLF'S STOMACH WITH STONES WHILE HE WAS STILL ASLEEP.

ONCE THE WOLF'S STOMACH WAS FULL OF STONES, THE MOTHER GOAT SEWED IT BACK UP AND LEFT. WHEN THE WOLF WOKE UP AT LAST, THE STONES INSIDE MADE HIM FEEL THIRSTY SO HE WENT LOOKING FOR A WELL. BUT JUST AS HE LEANED OVER TO TAKE A DRINK, THE HEAVY STONES MADE HIM FALL OVER AND DROWN.

COMMENTARY:

"THE WOLF AND THE SEVEN YOUNG GOATS" IS AMONG THE MOST WELL-KNOWN OF GRIMM'S FAIRY TALES. IN MY VERSION, I TRIED SETTING IT IN AN EERIE LAB AND REPLACING THE SEVEN GOATS WITH SEVEN CLONED CHILDREN. OF COURSE, WHEN YOU THINK OF CLONES, YOU'D LIKELY THINK OF DOLLY THE SHEEP. IT WOULD HAVE BEEN SO PERFECT HAD THE ORIGINAL STORY BEEN CALLED "THE WOLF AND THE SEVEN YOUNG SHEEP" INSTEAD.

BUT THEN AGAIN, "SHEEP, GOAT, THEY'RE PRETTY MUCH THE SAME THING. WHO REALLY CARES," SAYS THIS AUTHOR UNABASHEDLY DESPITE BEING THE SON OF A FARMER. IN ANY CASE, WITH THE 21ST CENTURY ABOUT TO BE PROFOUNDLY CHANGED BY BIOTECHNOLOGY, I THOUGHT THIS WAS AN APPROPRIATE TAKE ON AN OLD FAIRY TALE IN THE MODERN AGE.

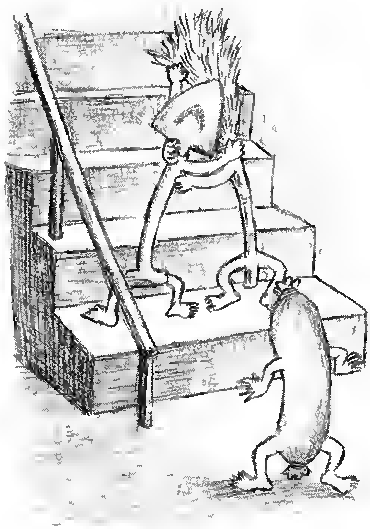
The Strange Inn

STORY:
ONCE UPON A TIME, A BLOOD SAUSAGE INVITED A LIVER SAUSAGE TO HIS HOUSE. UPON ENTERING THE BLOOD SAUSAGE'S HOUSE, THE LIVER SAUSAGE SAW MANY STRANGE THINGS, SUCH AS A SHOVEL AND A BROOM FIGHTING EACH OTHER, OR A MONKEY WITH A WOUND ON ITS HEAD. WHEN THE LIVER SAUSAGE MET THE BLOOD SAUSAGE, HE ASKED ABOUT THE STRANGE THINGS HE HAD SEEN. HOWEVER, THE BLOOD SAUSAGE ANSWERED INDIFFERENTLY, "THAT WAS JUST THE MAID GOSSIPING WITH SOMEONE," OR PRETENDED NOT TO HAVE HEARD THE QUESTION AT ALL. THE BLOOD SAUSAGE THEN LEFT FOR THE KITCHEN, SAYING HE NEEDED TO CHECK UP ON THINGS.

JUST THEN, SOMEONE CALLED OUT TO THE LIVER SAUSAGE, "LET ME WARN YOU, LIVER SAUSAGE, YOU'RE IN A BLOODY MURDEROUS TRAP. YOU'D BETTER GET OUT OF HERE IF YOU VALUE YOUR LIFE!" THE LIVER SAUSAGE DIDN'T THINK ABOUT IT TWICE AND RAN OUTSIDE. WHEN HE TURNED AROUND, HE SAW THE BLOOD SAUSAGE FROM THE WINDOW, WAVING A LONG KNIFE THAT LOOKED AS IF IT HAD JUST BEEN SHARPENED. THE BLOOD SAUSAGE MENACINGLY SHOUTED, "IF I HAD CAUGHT YOU, I WOULD HAVE FEASTED ON YOU!"

COMMENTARY:
ONE OF THE ODDEST TALES AMONG GRIMM'S FAIRY TALES. THE MAIN CHARACTER SEEING MANY STRANGE SIGHTS IS A COMMON PATTERN THAT OCCURS IN OTHER STORIES AS WELL. ONE SUCH SIMILAR STORY IS "THE GODFATHER." A SHORT SUMMARY OF THAT STORY FOLLOWS:

A POOR MAN WALKS OUTSIDE TO ASK THE FIRST MAN HE MET TO BE THE GODFATHER OF HIS NEW CHILD. THE STRANGER HE ASKED GAVE HIM A BOTTLE OF MAGIC WATER, SAYING IT COULD CURE ANY SICKNESS. AFTER TRYING OUT THE MAGICAL WATER, THE MAN WENT TO VISIT THE GODFATHER. ON THE FIRST FLOOR WAS A SHOVEL AND BROOM FIGHTING EACH OTHER. WHEN HE ASKED THEM WHERE THE GODFATHER WAS, THEY ANSWERED, "UPSTAIRS." THERE WERE HUMAN FINGERS ON THE SECOND FLOOR, DEAD HUMAN HEADS ON THE THIRD FLOOR, AND A FISH GRILLING ITS OWN SELF ON THE FOURTH FLOOR. THEY ALL TOLD HIM TO HEAD UPSTAIRS.



FINALLY ON THE FIFTH FLOOR, THE MAN PEERED INSIDE THE KEYHOLE AND SAW THE GODFATHER BUT WITH A PAIR OF LONG HORNS ON HIS HEAD. THE MAN THEN ENTERED THE ROOM AND ASKED THE GODFATHER ABOUT THE STRANGE THINGS HE HAD SEEN. THE GODFATHER REPLIED, "IT MUST HAVE BEEN THE MAID AND SERVANT," OR "THOSE WERE JUST BURDOCK ROOTS AND CABBAGE HEADS." WHEN HE ASKED ABOUT THE HORNS HE HAD SEEN, THE GODFATHER SAID THAT WAS SIMPLY RIDICULOUS. SCARED, THE MAN RAN OUTSIDE THE HOUSE.

"THE STRANGE INN" WAS ONLY INCLUDED IN THE FIRST EDITION OF GRIMM'S FAIRY TALES, AND BOTH "THE STRANGE INN" AND "THE GODFATHER" HAVE RATHER ABRUPT ENDINGS. CURIOUSLY ENOUGH, THE ONE WHO WARNS THE LIVER SAUSAGE IS NEVER REVEALED. PERHAPS THE PERSON WHO ORIGINALLY TOLD JACOB GRIMM THIS STORY ALSO DIDN'T KNOW WHO WARNED THE LIVER SAUSAGE. ALL IN ALL, THIS IS A BIZARRE AND SEEMINGLY-INDECIPHERABLE STORY WHICH ENDS ABRUPTLY, MAKING YOU WANT TO FIND OUT MORE... EXACTLY THE ELEMENTS WITHIN A STORY THAT EXCITES ME AS AN AUTHOR AND WHAT I STRIVE FOR IN MY WORK.

The Fisherman and his Wife

STORY:
ONCE UPON A TIME, THERE LIVED A FISHERMAND AND HIS WIFE IN A MISERABLE HOVEL BY THE SEA. ONE DAY, THE FISHERMAN TOLD HIS WIFE HE RELEASED A FLOUNDER HE CAUGHT AFTER IT TOLD HIM IT WAS REALLY AN ENCHANTED PRINCE. UPON HEARING THAT, THE WIFE TOLD HER HUSBAND TO GO BACK AND ASK FOR A PROPER COTTAGE. AND SO THE HUSBAND WENT BACK TO THE SEA AND TOLD THE FLOUNDER HIS WIFE'S WISH. THE FLOUNDER REPLIED, "GO HOME. SHE NOW HAS HER COTTAGE."

SOON AFTER, THE WIFE TOLD HER HUSBAND SHE WANTED A CASTLE. AFTER THAT, SHE WANTED TO BECOME KING. HER HUSBAND HAD NO CHOICE BUT TO GO AND TELL THE FLOUNDER HIS WIFE'S WISHES. EACH TIME HE WENT, THE ONCE-CALM SEA GREW MORE AND MORE VIOLENT. MEANWHILE, THE FLOUNDER REPLIED EVERY TIME, "GO HOME. HER WISH HAS BEEN GRANTED." STILL, THE WIFE'S GREED DID NOT ABATE. SHE WANTED TO BECOME THE EMPEROR, AND THEN THE POPE. AT LAST, THE WIFE WANTED TO BECOME LIKE GOD AND FORCED HER UNWILLING HUSBAND TO GO ASK THE FLOUNDER FOR HER. BY THE RAGING SEA, THE FISHERMAN ASKED THE FLOUNDER ONCE MORE. THE FLOUNDER THEN REPLIED, "GO HOME. YOUR WIFE IS SITTING IN HER MISERABLE HOVEL AGAIN." AND IT IS SAID THEY ARE STILL SITTING THERE EVEN TODAY.

COMMENTARY:
UNLIKE THE OTHER STORIES IN THIS COLLECTION, I PURPOSELY CHANGED VERY LITTLE FOR I THOUGHT THE ORIGINAL WAS A VERY WELL-TOLD STORY. THE RESTLESS SEA GROWING MORE AND MORE VIOLENT PERFECTLY CAPTURES THE MOOD OF THE WIFE AS HER GREED SPIRALS BEYOND HER CONTROL. THE FISHERMAN SATISFIED WITH HIS POOR LOT IN LIFE WHO NATURALLY ACCEPTS MAGIC WITHOUT A SECOND THOUGHT AND A WIFE WHO LOSES HERSELF AS ALL HER WISHES ARE GRANTED EFFORTLESSLY... WHICH IS MORE HUMAN AND REASONABLE, I WONDER...?

Snow White

STORY:
ONCE UPON A TIME, A QUEEN SAT BY HER BLACK-FRAMED WINDOW WHILE SEWING. AS SHE LOOKED AT THE SNOW OUTSIDE, SHE PRICKED HER FINGER WITH A NEEDLE. SEEING HER BLOOD, SHE THOUGHT TO HERSELF, "IF I ONLY HAD A CHILD AS WHITE AS SNOW, AS RED AS BLOOD, AND AS BLACK AS THIS WOOD." SOON AFTER, SHE GAVE BIRTH TO SUCH A DAUGHTER, AND THUS NAMED HER SNOW WHITE.

THE QUEEN HAD BEEN THE MOST BEAUTIFUL WOMAN IN THE LAND BUT WHEN HER MAGIC MIRROR TOLD HER THAT SNOW WHITE WAS A THOUSAND TIMES FAIRER THAN HER, SHE GREW TO DESPISE SNOW WHITE. ONE DAY, SHE ASKED A HUNTER TO LEAD SNOW WHITE INTO THE WOODS AND KILL HER, BUT THE HUNTER, UPON SEEING SNOW WHITE'S BEAUTY, DECIDED TO LET HER ESCAPE. AFTER WANDERING THE WOODS, SHE CAME TO LIVE WITH SEVEN DWARVES IN A LITTLE HOUSE. MEANWHILE, THE QUEEN HAD FOUND OUT FROM HER MIRROR THAT SNOW WHITE WAS STILL ALIVE, SO SHE DISGUISED HERSELF AS A PEDDLER AND WENT INTO THE WOODS TO KILL HER. TWICE SHE TRIED TO KILL SNOW WHITE, BUT THE DWARVES CAME AT THE LAST MINUTE TO REVIVE HER. HOWEVER ON THE THIRD ATTEMPT, SNOW WHITE WAS TRICKED INTO EATING A POISONED APPLE AND DIED.

AFTER GRIEVING, THE DWARVES LAID HER IN A GLASS COFFIN. ONE DAY, A PRINCE PASSING BY SAW SNOW WHITE, AS WELL-PRESERVED AS THE DAY SHE HAD DIED, AND FELL IN LOVE. AFTER OBTAINING PERMISSION FROM THE DWARVES, HE MOVED THE GLASS COFFIN WITH SNOW WHITE INSIDE BACK TO HIS CASTLE. ONE OF THE PRINCE'S SERVANTS ACCIDENTALLY STUMBLED WHILE CARRYING THE COFFIN, AND THIS CAUSED THE PIECE OF POISON APPLE TO DISLODGE FROM HER THROAT. SHE THEN MIRACULOUSLY REVIVED AND MARRIED THE OVERJOYED PRINCE. AT THEIR WEDDING CEREMONY, THEY PUT ON RED-HOT IRON SHOES ON THE QUEEN AND MADE HER DANCE UNTIL SHE DIED.

COMMENTARY:
"SNOW WHITE," A STORY SO FAMOUS IT NEEDS NO FURTHER EXPLANATION. HOWEVER, MANY ARE UNAWARE OF THE SURPRISING NUMBER OF ITS VARIATIONS. EVEN IN THE FIRST EDITION OF GRIMM'S FAIRY TALES, THE QUEEN WAS SNOW WHITE'S BIRTH-MOTHER, AND IT WAS ONLY IN THE LATER EDITIONS IN WHICH SHE WAS CHANGED TO A STEP-MOTHER. THERE ARE ALSO VARIATIONS ON HOW SHE CAME TO BE NAMED SNOW WHITE, ONE BEING HOW A COUNT RIDING ON HIS CARRIAGE PASSED BY THREE SNOW MOUNDS, THREE PUDDLES OF BLOOD, AND THREE BLACK CROWS. THERE'S ALSO A THEORY WHICH STATES SNOW WHITE MAY BE BASED ON A REAL-LIFE HISTORICAL FIGURE.

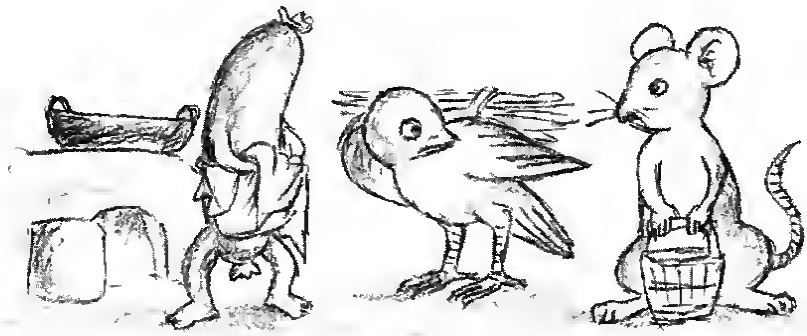
IN ANY CASE, IF YOU SUMMARIZE THE STORY IN BLUNT TERMS, "SNOW WHITE" IS ABOUT A GIRL WHO DIES AND COMES BACK TO LIFE THREE TIMES, A NECROPHILIAC PRINCE WHO TRIES TO BUY HER CORPSE, AND A FINAL TORTURE SCENE IN WHICH THE EVIL QUEEN IS KILLED WITH RED-HOT IRON SHOES... IF THIS DOESN'T SOUND LIKE A HORROR STORY, THEN I DON'T KNOW WHAT A HORROR STORY IS.

The Mouse, the Bird, and the Sausage

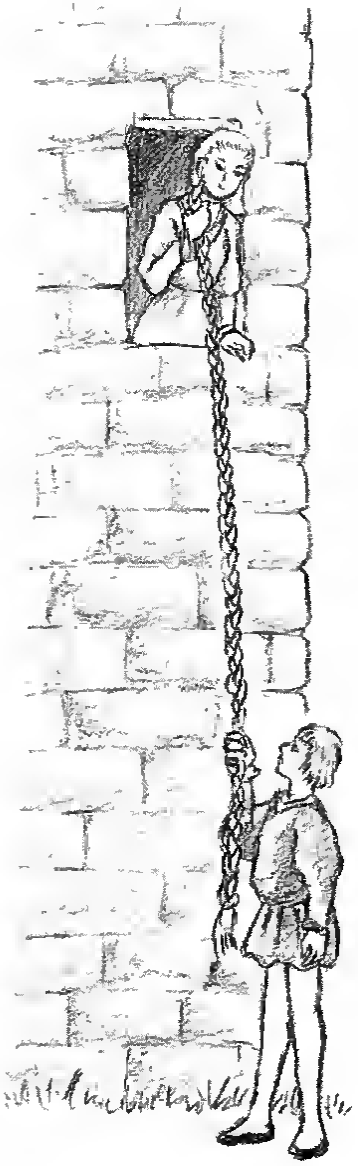
STORY:
ONCE UPON A TIME, THERE LIVED A MOUSE, A BIRD, AND A SAUSAGE TOGETHER. THE BIRD WENT INTO THE FOREST EVERY DAY TO FETCH WOOD, THE MOUSE CARRIED WATER, AND THE SAUSAGE COOKED THE MEALS. ONE DAY THE BIRD BOASTED HIS SITUATION TO ANOTHER BIRD BUT WAS TOLD HE WAS A FOOL FOR UNFAIRLY DOING THE HARDEST JOB. THE NEXT DAY, THE BIRD TOLD THE OTHER TWO THAT HE WAS TIRED OF HIS JOB AND WATCHED TO SWITCH. THUS IT WAS DECIDED THAT THE SAUSAGE WOULD FETCH THE WOOD, THE MOUSE COOK THE FOOD, AND THE BIRD CARRY THE WATER.

THE NEXT DAY, THE SAUSAGE WAS EATEN BY A DOG WHEN HE WENT INTO A FOREST. THE MOUSE, WHILE TRYING TO ROLL AROUND THE PAN LIKE THE SAUSAGE HAD DONE, ACCIDENTALLY DIED. THE BIRD, SEEING NOBODY HOME, SEARCHED ALL OVER FOR HIS FRIENDS WHILE SCATTERING THE WOOD, WHICH THEN CAUGHT ON FIRE. AS THE BIRD RUSHED OVER TO THE WELL FOR WATER, HE FELL INTO THE WELL AND DROWNED.

COMMENTARY:
"WHY DO I GET THE FEELING I'M UNFAIRLY WORKING HARDER THAN ANY OF MY CO-WORKERS?" THIS CREEPING SUSPICION WHICH FORMS THE BASE OF THIS STORY IS QUITE A REALISTIC ONE WHICH MUST HAVE EXISTED EVEN DURING THE AGE IN WHICH THE GRIMM BROTHERS LIVED. IT'S EVEN MORE RELEVANT NOWADAYS IN WHICH EVERYONE IS CONSTANTLY TRYING TO FIND WAYS TO MAKE THEIR LIVES EASIER. AND SO, I DECIDED TO GIVE A SLIGHTLY MORE MODERN TAKE ON THE TALE BY HAVING THE THREE FRIENDS START A BUSINESS OF THEIR OWN LIKE MANY YOUNG AMBITIOUS ENTREPRENEURS DO THESE DAYS.



Rapunzel



STORY:
LONG AGO, A WIFE AND HER HUSBAND DEARLY WANTED A CHILD. ONE DAY, THE WIFE HAD SUCH AN INTENSE CRAVING FOR THE RAPUNZEL GROWING IN A NEARBY GARDEN THAT SHE TOLD HER HUSBAND SHE WOULD DIE IF SHE COULDN'T EAT THEM. THE HUSBAND THUS SNUCK INTO THE GARDEN BUT WAS FOUND BY ITS OWNER, A WITCH. THE WITCH THREATENED THE HUSBAND INTO AGREEING TO EXCHANGE HIS FIRST-BORN CHILD FOR SOME RAPUNZEL. WHEN THE WIFE LATER GAVE BIRTH TO A BABY GIRL, THE WITCH CAME FOR THE BABY, WHOM SHE NAMED RAPUNZEL.

WHEN RAPUNZEL WAS 12, THE WITCH LOCKED HER UP INSIDE A TALL TOWER WHICH ONLY HAD A SMALL WINDOW. WHENEVER THE WITCH WANTED TO COME INSIDE THE TOWER, SHE WOULD SAY, "RAPUNZEL, RAPUNZEL, LET DOWN YOUR HAIR." RAPUNZEL HAD BEAUTIFUL GOLD HAIR WHICH SHE THEN LET DOWN TO LET THE WITCH CLIMB UP THROUGH THE WINDOW.

ONE DAY, A PRINCE HAPPENED TO WITNESS THE SECRET TO ENTERING THE TOWER AND DECIDED TO TRY IT HIMSELF WHEN THE WITCH WAS GONE. WHEN THE PRINCE CLIMBED UP SUCCESSFULLY, THE TWO FELL IN LOVE. THEIR TRYSTS CONTINUED UNTIL RAPUNZEL'S PREGNANT BELLY ALERTED THE WITCH TO WHAT HAD BEEN GOING ON. IN HER RAGE, THE WITCH CUT RAPUNZEL'S HAIR AND TOSSED HER INTO THE WILDERNESS. WHEN THE PRINCE CAME UP TO THE TOWER THAT NIGHT, HE ONLY FOUND THE WITCH, WHO TOLD HIM HE WOULD NEVER SEE RAPUNZEL AGAIN. IN DESPAIR, THE PRINCE THREW HIMSELF OFF THE TOWER, ONLY TO BE BLINDED BY THE THORN BUSHES BELOW.

MEANWHILE, RAPUNZEL TRIES HER BEST TO SURVIVE IN THE WILDERNESS AND RAISE THE TWINS SHE GAVE BIRTH TO. ONE DAY, HER SINGING VOICE CATCHES THE ATTENTION OF THE BLIND PRINCE AND THE TWO ARE FINALLY REUNITED. WHEN RAPUNZEL'S TEARS FALL ONTO THE PRINCE'S EYES, HIS SIGHT IS RESTORED AND THEY LIVE HAPPILY EVER AFTER.

COMMENTARY:
A GIRL LOCKED UP INSIDE A TOWER AND HER MAGICAL LONG HAIR... THIS WAS A STORY I FELT VERY DRAWN TOWARDS AND I FELT THAT I COULD DO A LOT OF DIFFERENT VARIATIONS ON ITS BASIC ELEMENTS, WHICH IS WHY I ACTUALLY DID ANOTHER RAPUNZEL-STORY UNDER THE EXACT SAME TITLE (RAPUNZEL), PUBLISHED UNDER ASAHI SONORAMA. IN FACT, EVEN THE BOOK'S SUBTITLE, "FRAU TRUDE AND OTHER GRIMM-LIKE FAIRY TALES," IS ALMOST THE SAME AS THIS BOOK'S. IN ANY CASE, THAT OTHER STORY WAS A PSYCHOLOGICAL DRAMA TOLD FROM RAPUNZEL'S PERSPECTIVE WHILE THIS ONE TURNED OUT TO BE A SORT OF CLICHED SCI-FI SHORT. IT TURNED OUT TO BE PRETTY DIFFICULT IN TRYING TO PULL OFF SUCH RADICALLY DIFFERENT VARIATIONS.

Herr Korbes

STORY:
Once upon a time there were a rooster and a hen who went off on a journey on a handsome carriage with four red wheels, drawn by four mice. Not long afterward they met a cat, who said, "Where are you going?"

The rooster answered, "We're on our way to Herr Korbes's house."
"Take me with you," said the cat.

The rooster answered, "Gladly. Climb on behind, so you won't fall off the front. Be careful not to get my red wheels dirty. Roll, wheels. Whistle, mice. We're on our way to Herr Korbes's house."

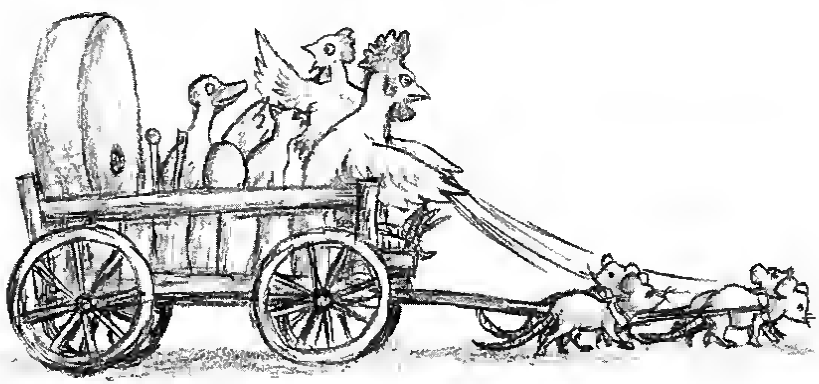
Then a millstone came along, then an egg, then a duck, then a pin, and finally a needle. They all climbed aboard the carriage and rode with them.

But when they arrived at Herr Korbes's house, he was not there. The mice pulled the carriage into the barn. The hen and the rooster flew onto a pole. The cat sat down in the fireplace and the duck in the water bucket. The egg rolled itself up in a towel. The pin stuck itself into a chair cushion. The needle jumped onto the bed in the middle of the pillow. The millstone lay down above the door.

Then Herr Korbes came home. He went to the fireplace, wanting to make a fire, and the cat threw ashes into his face. He ran quickly into the kitchen to wash himself, and the duck splashed water into his face. He wanted to dry himself off with the towel, but the egg rolled against him, broke, and glued his eyes shut. Wanting to rest, he sat down in the chair, and the pin pricked him. He fell into a rage and threw himself onto his bed, but when he laid his head on the pillow, the needle pricked him, causing him to scream and run out of the house. As he ran through the front door the millstone jumped down and struck him dead.

COMMENTARY:
A very violent fairy tale in which animals and inanimate objects maim and kill a single human for seemingly no reason. Incidentally, America launched its invasion of Iraq right around the time I drew this story.

In any case, the original story has four mice pulling the carriage, but it was rather difficult showing all of them in one picture so I decided to go with just two mice.



The Death of the Little Hen

STORY:
ONCE UPON A TIME, A HEN AND A ROOSTER WENT TO NUT MOUNTAIN. THERE, THE HEN FOUND A LARGE NUT, BUT NOT WANTING TO SHARE, SHE SWALLOWED IT WHOLE. HOWEVER, IT GOT STUCK IN HER THROAT AND SO THE HEN CRIED OUT DESPERATELY FOR WATER. THE ROOSTER WENT TO A WELL FOR WATER BUT THE WELL TOLD HIM TO BRING A RED SILK FROM THE BRIDE. THE ROOSTER WENT TO THE BRIDE, BUT SHE TOLD HIM TO RETRIEVE HER FLOWER WREATH HANGING FROM A BRANCH. AND SO THE ROOSTER PICKED THE WREATH OFF THE BRANCH, GAVE IT TO THE BRIDE IN RETURN FOR HER RED SILK, WHICH HE THEN GAVE TO THE FOUNTAIN FOR WATER. BUT BY THE TIME THE ROOSTER RETURNED WITH THE WATER, THE HEN HAD ALREADY DIED.

SEEING HOW SAD THE ROOSTER WAS, SIX MICE BUILT A CARRIAGE IN WHICH THEY'D CARRY THE DEAD HEN ON TO A GRAVE. ALONG THE WAY, THEY MET A FOX, WOLF, BEAR, ELK, LION, AND OTHER ANIMALS OF THE FOREST WHO DECIDED TO ACCOMPANY THEM. THEY THEN CAME ACROSS A BROOK. FIRST THE MICE TRIED CROSSING THE BROOK ON A STRAW, BUT THE STRAW BROKE AND THE MICE DROWNED. THEN, A COAL CAME ALONG AND OFFERED TO TO LAY ITSELF ACROSS TO BE A BRIDGE, BUT IT TOO HISSED AND DIED WHEN IT TOUCHED THE WATER. FINALLY, A STONE CAME AND DECIDED TO HELP BY LAYING ITSELF ACROSS THE BROOK. THE ROOSTER THEN TRIED TO PULL THE CARRIAGE OVER, BUT THE CARRIAGE WAS TOO HEAVY AND ROLLED BACK, FALLING INTO THE WATER, DROWNING ALL THE OTHER ANIMALS.

THE ROOSTER WAS NOW ALONE WITH THE HEN. HE DUG A GRAVE AND LAID HER INSIDE. THERE, HE CRIED UNTIL HE TOO DIED FROM GRIEF. AND SO, EVERYONE WAS NOW DEAD.

COMMENTARY:
AN ABSURD TALE WHICH ABRUPTLY ENDS WITH THE LINE, "AND SO, EVERYONE WAS NOW DEAD." THERE'S QUITE A FEW OF THESE STORIES IN GRIMM'S FAIRY TALES IN WHICH THE CHARACTERS DIE ONE BY ONE, UNTIL EVERYONE IS DEAD BY THE END. IN ANY CASE, I FOUND THE ABSURDITY QUITE AMUSING, SO I DECIDED TO MAKE A MYSTERY/COURT DRAMA SPOOF OUT OF IT.

Puss in Boots

STORY:
ONCE UPON A TIME, THE YOUNGEST SON OF A MILLER INHERITED A MERE CAT WHEN HIS FATHER PASSED AWAY, FOR HIS TWO OLDER BROTHERS RECEIVED THE MILL AND THE DONKEY. HOWEVER, THE CAT TOLD HIM HE COULD TURN HIS LUCK AROUND IF HE GAVE THE CAT A PAIR OF BOOTS. AFTER RECEIVING A PAIR OF BOOTS, THE CAT WENT OUT TO THE FOREST AND CAUGHT RABBITS AND BIRDS TO PRESENT TO THE KING, SAYING IT WAS A GIFT FROM HIS MASTER, THE MARQUIS OF CARABAS.

AFTER FREQENTLY PRESENTING SUCH GIFTS TO THE KING, THE CAT THEN TOLD HIS MASTER TO BATHE IN THE RIVER. THE CAT THEN SHOUTED OUT TO THE KING AND THE PRINCESS WHO WERE RIDING IN A CARRIAGE PASSING-BY, "HELP! THE MARQUIS OF CARABAS IS DROWNING!" THE KING IMMEDIATELY ORDERED HIS GUARDS TO SAVE THE DROWNING MARQUIS. WHILE THEY PULLED HIM OUT OF THE RIVER, THE CAT TOLD THE KING THAT THE MARQUIS' CLOTHES HAD BEEN STOLEN BY THIEVES. AND SO, THE KING PRESENTED THE LAD WITH A NEW SET OF CLOTHES AND GAVE HIM A RIDE INSIDE THE CARRIAGE.

MEANWHILE, THE CAT RAN AHEAD OF THE CARRIAGE AND TOLD THE FARMERS TO ANSWER, "MARQUIS OF CARABAS," IF ANYBODY ASKED WHOSE LANDS THEY WERE ON. AS THE CARRIAGE PASSED BY THE FARMERS, THE KING ASKED WHOSE LAND THEY WERE ON JUST AS THE CAT HAD EXPECTED. THE KING WAS THUS IMPRESSED BY THE VAST LANDS THE MARQUIS OF CARABAS OWNED.

THE CAT RAN STILL FURTHER AHEAD TO A CASTLE, INHABITED BY AN OGRE, TO WHOM THE LANDS REALLY BELONGED TO. THE OGRE HAD THE MAGICAL ABILITY TO TRANSFORM INTO ANY CREATURE. THE CAT TRICKS THE OGRE INTO TURNING INTO A MOUSE, ALLOWING THE CAT TO THEN EAT UP THE OGRE. WHEN THE KING ARRIVED AT THE CASTLE, THE CAT CAME OUT AND WELCOMED HIM TO THE MARQUIS OF CARABAS' CASTLE. THE KING WAS SO IMPRESSED AT THE GRAND CASTLE THAT HE THEN GAVE HIS DAUGHTER'S HAND IN MARRIAGE TO THE LAD.

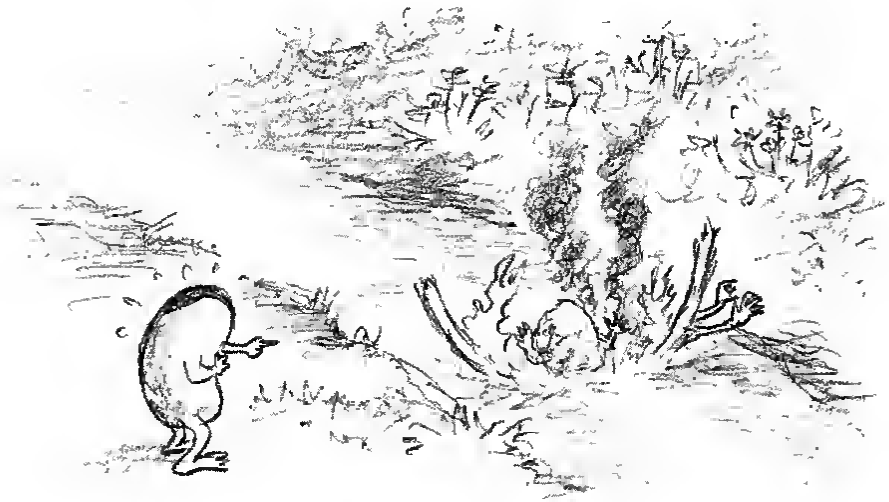
COMMENTARY:
ANOTHER FAMOUS FAIRY TALE, THOUGH THIS IS FROM PERRAULT'S "TALES AND STORIES OF THE PAST WITH MORALS." A SIMILAR STORY IS ALSO IN THE GRIMM'S FAIRY TALES, BUT THERE IS NO MENTION OF THE MARQUIS OF CARABAS; PERRAULT'S VERSION IS BELIEVED TO BE THE ORIGINAL. I DO ADMIT IT IS A LITTLE ODD ADDING A NON-GRIMM'S FAIRY TALE DESPITE THIS COLLECTION'S TITLE BUT; GRIMM, PERRAULT, THEY'RE ALL FOREIGNERS, WHAT'S THE DIFFERENCE? ...AND SO THIS JAPANESE AUTHOR BRUSHES ASIDE SUCH WORRIES.

The Straw, the Coal, and the Bean

STORY:
ONCE UPON A TIME, AN OLD WOMAN PREPARED A FIRE TO COOK SOME BEANS. TO MAKE IT BURN FASTER SHE LIT IT WITH A HANDFUL OF STRAW. WHILE SHE WAS POURING THE BEANS INTO THE POT, ONE OF THEM FELL UNNOTICED TO THE FLOOR, COMING TO REST NEXT TO A PIECE OF STRAW. SOON AFTERWARD A GLOWING COAL JUMPED OUT OF THE FIREPLACE AND LANDED NEXT TO THEM.

THE STRAW, COAL, AND BEAN THEN DECIDED TO GO OFF ON A JOURNEY TOGETHER. THEY SOON CAME ACROSS A BROOK WITH NO BRIDGE OR CROSSING NEARBY. THE STRAW OFFERED TO LIE DOWN AND BE A BRIDGE. WHEN THE COAL TRIED TO CROSS FIRST, IT ACCIDENTALLY LIT THE STRAW ON FIRE, WHO THEN BROKE INTO TWO AND FELL DOWN. THE COAL ALSO FELL INTO THE RIVER ALONG WITH THE STRAW AND DIED. MEANWHILE, THE BEAN WHO STAYED BEHIND ON THE OTHER SIDE LAUGHED SO HARD AT THIS UNTIL ITS BODY BURST. FORTUNATELY, A WANDERING TAILOR CAME BY AND STITCHED THE BEAN BACK UP. HOWEVER, BECAUSE HE HAD USED A BLACK STRING, SINCE THAT TIME ALL BEANS HAVE HAD A BLACK SEAM.

COMMENTARY:
A RELATIVELY SIMPLE FAIRY TALE, BUT BEHIND ITS CHARMS IS A RATHER MACABRE ELEMENT, AS TWO OF THE MAIN CHARACTERS DIE AND THE OTHER LAUGHS AT THE DEATHS OF HIS FRIENDS. SINCE THIS ONESHOT WAS ORIGINALLY PUBLISHED IN A MYSTERY-FOCUSED MAGAZINE, I TRIED MAKING A DETECTIVE-STORY OUT OF IT. I HAD NEVER DONE DETECTIVE FICTION PRIOR TO THIS, BUT I DOUBT THERE'S EVER BEEN ANYONE WHO WROTE A STORY IN WHICH A PIECE OF COAL AND STRAW WAS USED TO COMMIT MURDER.



Brewery of Egg Shells

STORY:
ONCE UPON A TIME, A MOTHER HAD HER CHILD TAKEN FROM THE CRADLE BY ELVES. IN THE BABY'S PLACE, THEY LAID A CHANGELING WITH A THICK HEAD AND STARING EYES WHO WOULD DO NOTHING BUT EAT AND DRINK. IN DISTRESS SHE WENT TO A NEIGHBOR AND ASKED FOR ADVICE, WHO THEN TOLD HER THUS.

"CARRY THE CHANGELING INTO THE KITCHEN, SET IT ON THE HEARTH, MAKE A FIRE, AND BOIL WATER IN TWO EGGSHELLS. THAT SHOULD MAKE THE CHANGELING LAUGH, AND IF HE LAUGHS IT WILL BE ALL OVER WITH HIM."

THE WOMAN DID EVERYTHING JUST AS HER NEIGHBOR SAID. WHEN SHE PLACED THE EGGSHELLS FILLED WITH WATER OVER THE FIRE, THE CHANGELING LAUGHED AND SAID:

NOW I AM AS OLD
AS THE WESTERWALD,
BUT HAVE NEVER SEEN ANYONE
COOKING IN SHELLS.

WHEN HE LAUGHED, A BAND OF LITTLE ELVES SUDDENLY APPEARED. THEY BROUGHT THE RIGHTFUL CHILD, SET IT ON THE HEARTH, AND TOOK THE CHANGELING AWAY.

COMMENTARY:
THE THIRD TALE IN THE SET OF RELATED TALES TITLED, "THE ELVES." THE ORIGINAL TALE IS QUITE A SHORT STORY, SO I TOOK TO WONDERING WHAT MIGHT HAPPEN IF THE CHANGELING NEVER LAUGHED, WHICH LED TO MY VERSION.

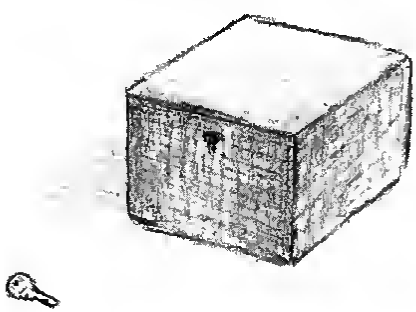
The Golden Key

STORY:
ONCE IN THE WINTERTIME WHEN THE SNOW WAS VERY DEEP, A POOR BOY HAD TO GO OUT AND FETCH WOOD ON A SLED. AFTER HE HAD GATHERED IT TOGETHER AND LOADED IT, HE DID NOT WANT TO GO STRAIGHT HOME, BECAUSE HE WAS SO FROZEN, BUT INSTEAD TO MAKE A FIRE AND WARM HIMSELF A LITTLE FIRST. SO HE SCRAPED THE SNOW AWAY, AND WHILE HE WAS THUS CLEARING THE GROUND HE FOUND A SMALL GOLDEN KEY. NOW HE BELIEVED THAT WHERE THERE WAS A KEY, THERE MUST ALSO BE A LOCK, SO HE DUG IN THE GROUND AND FOUND A LITTLE IRON CHEST.

"IF ONLY THE KEY FITS!" HE THOUGHT. "CERTAINLY THERE ARE VALUABLE THINGS IN THE CHEST." HE LOOKED, BUT THERE WAS NO KEYHOLE. FINALLY HE FOUND ONE, BUT SO SMALL THAT IT COULD SCARCELY BE SEEN. HE TRIED THE KEY, AND FORTUNATELY IT FITTED. THEN HE TURNED IT ONCE, AND NOW WE MUST WAIT UNTIL HE HAS FINISHED UNLOCKING IT AND HAS OPENED THE LID. THEN WE SHALL FIND OUT WHAT KIND OF WONDERFUL THINGS THERE WERE IN THE LITTLE CHEST.

SUMMARY:
SINCE THE SECOND EDITION OF GRIMM'S FAIRY TALES TO THE SEVENTH, THIS STORY HAS OCCUPIED THE LAST POSITION. IN AN ATTEMPT TO FOLLOW THE GRIMM BROTHERS' LEAD, I TOO, PLACED MY OWN VERSION AT THE VERY END. HOWEVER, IN THE GRIMM'S FAIRY TALES, THE GOLDEN KEY IS A CHARMING TALE THAT IMPLIES THE WONDER OF FAIRY TALES IS ENDLESS, WHEREAS THE VERSION IN MY COLLECTION COMES ACROSS AS A MANGAKA'S RATHER FEEBLE ATTEMPT AT PULLING A STORY OUT OF HIS ASS IN THE MIDST OF WRITER'S BLOCK.

IN ANY CASE, THE BOX IN THE GRIMM'S ORIGINAL VERSION MAY HAVE BEEN FILLED WITH MORE WONDERFUL THINGS YET TO COME, BUT I'M AFRAID THE BOX IN MY HEAD IS COMPLETELY EMPTY, AND THUS I MUST RING DOWN THE CURTAINS AND SAY GOOD-BYE.



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